

THE TIMES

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50P



TODAY

THE HIT GIRLS

Alan Jackson on the femrock revolution

MAGAZINE

AT HOME WITH JEFFREY

Iain Sinclair on Lord Archer's private view

weekend

FRENCH LEAVE

Five-page travel special on the joys of France

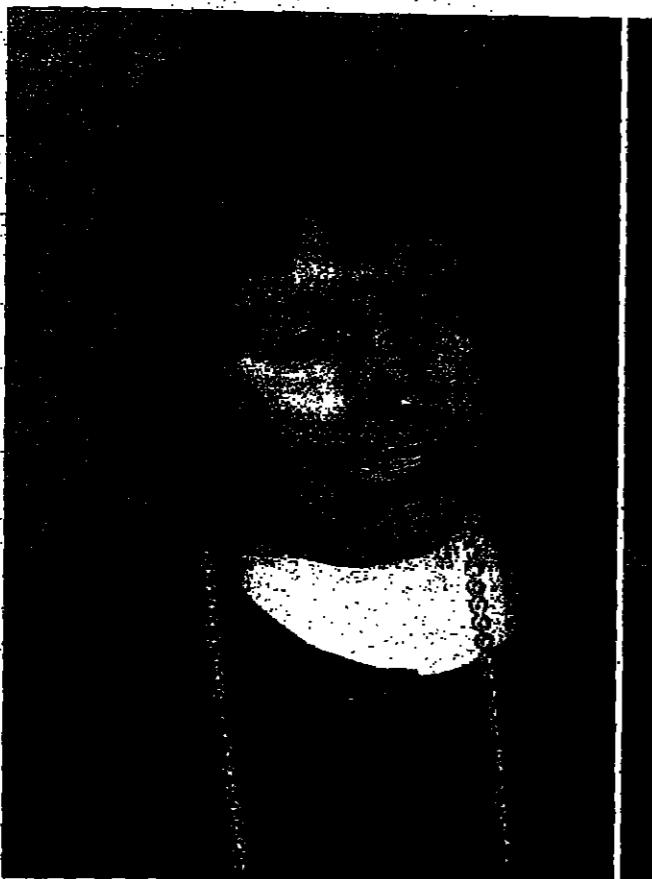
WEEKEND MONEY

How election fever is hitting your pocket



PLUS INSIDE: CAR 97, 1015 FOR YOUNG TIMES READERS, THE DIRECTORY FOR THE BEST 1000 BUSINESSES

Offer of compensation or job back as warpath across Europe ends at Frankfurt HQ



8.30, KENSINGTON: Ms Horlick heads for the office 9.45, FINSBURY CIRCUS: A brief unscheduled meeting with Martyn Drain, head of personnel at Morgan Grenfell 2.30, FRANKFURT: Ms Horlick calls the bank HQ

City bank superwoman wins the day

By Carol Minshew

NICOLA HORLICK, the City "superwoman" suspended by her employer Morgan Grenfell, yesterday staged a dramatic showdown at the bank's headquarters in Frankfurt in an effort to win back her job.

Ms Horlick, 35, who angrily denied allegations that she had tried to poach staff for a rival company, spent more than an hour in discussions with Deutsche Bank, Morgan Grenfell's parent.

She emerged victorious, claiming that a lawyer and the head of the Human Resources Department had listened to her story and

discussed two possible options: reinstatement or compensation.

Ms Horlick said that the company had agreed to a full investigation.

She said: "I was very happy with what they have said. I was extremely pleased that they were prepared to listen to my side." Earlier she had accused Morgan Grenfell of acting like judge and jury.

She added: "These were very reasonable people. I feel they wanted to see a fair outcome. I am very grateful to them for doing that and I am a lot happier than I was this morning. It has restored my faith in human nature."

It was the culmination of an extraordinary day in which she

had led a procession of journalists around her former office in London publicly demanding to be reinstated.

A posse of Fleet Street reporters, photographers and TV camera crew then escorted her to Frankfurt but the confrontation erupted into farce when she failed to emerge from the offices to brief journalists. A security guard told the waiting pack that she had slipped out of a back door and gone to the airport. She was later tracked down to a coffee bar at Terminal 2 where she said that she and the bank had agreed a form of words.

However she said she was "very unhappy" with a statement issued by Morgan Grenfell in London which said that the Deutsche Bank had seen her only out of courtesy.

Ms Horlick, a mother of five, had claimed that she had been brutally treated by a "machiavellian" regime. She also believed that senior figures had felt she devoted too much time to her children, one of whom has leukaemia.

This extraordinary day began when Ms Horlick decided during a sleepless night that she would have to take drastic action to save her reputation. On Tuesday she had been suspended from her new job as managing director of Morgan Grenfell Asset Management.

She got up early to feed her seven-month old baby Antonia and prepare for a showdown with chief executive Robert Smith, at the Finsbury Circus offices in London where she has worked since 1991.

At 8.15, she appeared at the door of her £1.3 million mansion in Kensington holding Antonia and declared that she had decided she was going to fight a David and Goliath battle.

"I am going to feed my baby, get changed and then I am going to take drastic action to save her reputation. On Tuesday she had been suspended from her new job as managing director of Morgan Grenfell Asset Management.

She got up early to feed her seven-month old baby Antonia and prepare for a showdown with chief executive Robert Smith, at the Finsbury Circus offices in London where she has worked since 1991.

She swept through the front door and made for the staircase — "not the lift, they will be able to block them off" — to go to her third floor office. There were gasps of astonishment as she led reporters and photographers in a style which one member of staff likened to the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

The staff at Morgan Grenfell

could scarcely believe what they were seeing. Like a miniature tornado she stormed through their offices trailing a procession of journalists.

Rows of suited City workers looked up aghast from their screens, as, head held high, their former boss brushed aside frantic security guards on her way to the chief executive's office.

"Lay a finger on me and I will call the police," she told security. "Lay a finger on them," she added, pointing to the press, "and I will still call the police. Some of her former colleagues shouted encouragement. "Well done Nicola.

Continued on page 2, col 5

Millennium plan rescued by deal

The Millennium Exhibition has been saved after an agreement was struck between the Government, the Labour Party and the Millennium Commission.

The deal came after another day of talks between Michael Heseltine and Tony Blair, who devised a formula which the commission is expected to approve today. Page 2

Gingrich faces \$100,000 penalty

Newt Gingrich is to be ordered to pay a penalty of at least \$100,000 (£60,000) after the special counsel investigating ethics charges against the House Speaker released a highly condemnatory report. However, the fine is not likely to prompt Mr Gingrich to resign. Page 17

First British war crimes trial ends before it begins

By Bill Frost

BRITAIN'S first Nazi war crimes trial collapsed before it began yesterday, costing the taxpayer £4 million and casting doubt over any future prosecutions.

An Old Bailey jury decided that Szymon Serafinowicz, an 86-year-old retired carpenter from Banstead in Surrey, was unfit to stand trial after hearing evidence that he was suffering from Alzheimer's disease. He had faced three specimen charges of murdering unknown Jews in his native Belarus between November 1941 and March 1942 while the country was under the Nazis.

The verdict adds to the cost of unmasking alleged war criminals living in this country, currently standing at £15 million and with five suspects still under investigation.

As he left the Old Bailey, Mr Serafinowicz's son Kazimierz said: "Justice has been done. They brought out all the big guns against my father — the Solicitor-General was called in to prosecute. But in the end the jury saw how crazy it was. He did not kill Jews; he is anyone who says he did is either a pony or a liar."

Helping his frail father to a waiting car, he added: "All we want to do now is go home to Banstead and be left alone. This has made him even more

ill than he was before — a cruel farce."

Nicholas Bowers, the family solicitor, said that the jury had made the right decision. But Mr Serafinowicz regretted that he would not now have the opportunity to clear his name.

The prosecution had said that the murder counts were specimen charges, designed to reflect a much greater scale of involvement in the murder of as many as 3,000 Jews in the Mir area of Belarus.

During an eight-day hearing the court heard from doctors who agreed that Serafinowicz was suffering from dementia, probably of the progressive and incurable Alzheimer's disease, to such an extent that he was unfit to stand trial.

After the jury unanimously found he was "under a disability" and therefore unfit to stand trial, Sir Derek Spencer, QC, the Solicitor-General, said the prosecution had given "careful consideration to the options available". Counsel had decided to invite the Attorney-General to offer a *nonne prosequi* — an unwillingness to prosecute in the case — and he had accepted.

Mr Serafinowicz sat with his head bowed and showed no emotion as the jury decided no guilty verdict. Continued on page 3, col 1



Fossett likely to be forced down in India

Balloon may be grounded by Gaddafi

By Quentin Letts

IN NEW YORK

THE AMERICAN hot air balloonist Steve Fossett may be forced to abandon his attempt to fly around the world after Libya refused him permission to overfly.

Mr Fossett's new route over Niger, Chad and Egypt will use so much propane fuel that he will almost certainly have to put down his craft *Solo Spirit* in India.

The cable to Mr Fossett's Chicago mission control from Colonel Gaddafi's authorities in Tripoli read: "We regret/advise cannot issue permission for your balloon."

Richard Branson, whose own attempt to fly round the world in a balloon ended in failure earlier this month, said he understood decision was due to the Muslim festival of Ramadan.

Farewell, old fruit, we're sad to see you go

By John Hopkins

HAIL old friend. You have been bruised, squashed, twisted, peeled, pushed and pummeled. You have brought succour to millions of rugby players who have gnawed at your ravenous, sucked you, spat you out, thrown you to the ground and even trodden you into the sodden turf.

We are sad to say, old fruit, your days are numbered. We hope you will take this on the peel. You are about to be kicked into touch.

In case we do not get another chance, well say: "Farewell, orange, and thanks." You may have been a humble Jaffa to the local greengrocer, but to us you were the cat's pyjamas.

Watch this afternoon's international matches and after 40 minutes the referee will blow his whistle for half-time. For five minutes the players will gather round their captains and coaches until the referee blows again and another 40 minutes of play commences. Such is the very order of things, like the setting of the sun and the rising of the moon.

Now, though, comes news from Dublin, where the lawmakers have been meeting, that when a new season starts in the southern hemisphere in March, the five-minute interval is to be doubled and

players may leave the pitch.

No more will they be seen to be putting a chunk of orange

into their mouths and sucking it dry before picking at their teeth to remove its last shards and taking a glut, glut, glut of restorative drink. From March, in games at the highest level at least, all this and more will take place behind closed doors.

How sad. Another essential part of the fabric of the game is changed. Perhaps, then, this is the moment to raise a point. When did the orange assume this enormous role? Were there oranges at Twickenham when it was known as William's cabbage patch? And what about at Cardiff Arms Park? Perhaps one of those tribal anthems sung so lustily in Cardiff was as much a paean to oranges as it was to the men in red shirts, who always seemed to win, in those days at any rate.

And why, whether it was in

Invercargill or Inverness, was it always oranges that were brought out at half-time, never satsumas, mandarins or tangerines, kiwi fruit or avocado pears?

So farewell old round one.

you did us proud; and fare-

well, too, to half-time. What

will you think of next? Chang-

ing the shape of the ball

perhaps.

Now, though, comes news

from Dublin, where the law-

makers have been meet-

ing, that when a new sea-

son starts in March, the

five-minute interval is to be doubled and

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PLUS: DRIVING AMBITION
The Times/Daihatsu search for the young golf stars of tomorrow

BALLOT 97

Late deal saves Millennium Exhibition

BY DAMIAN WHITWORTH AND ANDREW PIERCE

THE Millennium Exhibition was saved after weeks of uncertainty when an agreement was struck late last night between the Government, the Labour Party and the Millennium Commission.

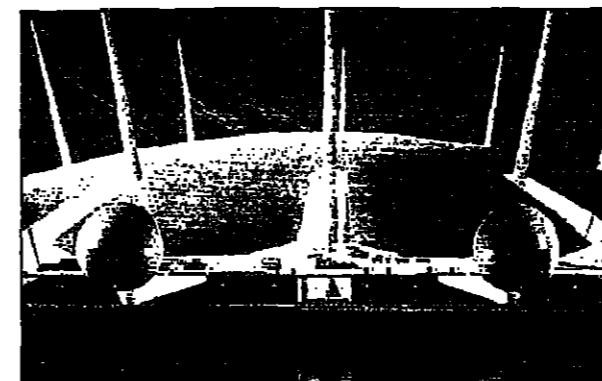
The deal came after another 24 hours of negotiations between Michael Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister, and Tony Blair. They came up with an agreed formula which the Millennium Commission is expected to approve today.

A spokesman for Mr Heseltine, who has invested much of his personal authority in the project, confirmed that the massive project was back on schedule. "We are delighted that the exhibition is going ahead," he said. "I think you will find all three sides have got what they

wanted." However, as uncertainty continued over whether the troubled project could be saved, Labour and the Tories blamed each other for the hold-up. A spokesman for Mr Blair said: "Discussions are continuing. Mr Blair and Mr Heseltine are confident that an announcement will be made tomorrow."

However, even as negotiations continued over Labour's insistence on being able to review the project if it wins the election, a further setback emerged. The designers of the proposed dome, the centrepiece of the £800 million exhibition, admitted that they had no idea how much it would cost.

Imagination, a design company, disclosed that it had come up with 34 designs for



One of the designs for the Millennium Dome, which will be twice the size of Wembley Stadium

the dome, which will be twice the size of Wembley Stadium, to match an equal number of different budgets. The latest price tag was £800 million.

Pam Williams of Imagination said: "We don't know what the final figure will be. It

is not a question for us. It is an issue for the Millennium people who are still talking about it."

As the Millennium Commission studied the form of words agreed by Labour and the Government on the future

of the project, a spokeswoman said that the Commission had to be satisfied that the project could be delivered under the terms sought by both sides.

Officials from the Government, the Labour Party and the Commission spent the day continuing to thrash out the arguments. The Commission has said that the project is in danger of collapse unless agreement is reached immediately because time is running out for work contracts to be signed.

Tony Blair has been told that the scheme would be "dead in the water" without his support. Financial backers would be scared off for fear that a Labour government would scrap the celebrations if they were not deemed financially viable.

Mr Heseltine, engaged in a delicate balancing act with

Labour over the project, was careful not to criticise the Opposition. John Major, anxious to ensure the Government is not blamed if the deal collapses, was not so restrained. He said on BBC local radio yesterday: "The Labour Party has had its representative on the discussions and debate over this project right from the outset. It's very surprising at the last moment that they have failed to understand what is going on and created this difficulty."

Jack Cunningham, the Shadow Heritage Secretary, said that agreement could have been reached on Wednesday if the Government had accepted Labour's demands. He denied that Labour had ever threatened to cancel the project, but said it wanted to make sure there was no massive funding gap.

Horlick hires City spin doctors to handle her offensive

Bank embarks on campaign to calm pensions clients

BY ROBERT MILLER, BANKING CORRESPONDENT

EXECUTIVES at Morgan Grenfell embarked on a charm offensive yesterday to reassure anxious City and pension fund clients in the wake of the Horlick suspension and subsequent resignation.

Many Morgan Grenfell investors are pension fund trustees, who have a legal and moral duty to safeguard billions of pounds on behalf of millions of pensioners.

Mrs Horlick and her 30-strong team looked after £18 billion of UK pensions fund business out of total assets managed by the firm of £70 billion.

During the past five years Mrs Horlick and her former boss Keith Percy, who left the City investment house in the wake of the Peter Young affair, have produced above average returns for their clients. According to the latest index published by WM, the performance monitoring agency, Morgan Grenfell's funds out-

performed all its pension fund rivals last year by 2.5 per cent. One of the larger clients is the Railways Pension Trustee Company, which has £1.25 billion invested with the firm, and looks after the interests of 330,000 members. David Adams, the chief executive of the railways pension company said yesterday: "In view of the recent events we shall of course be keeping an extra close eye on what is happening."

"We shall be watching to see whether the previous good performance can be maintained and whether staff remain at their posts. We also want to know if there will be any changes to the way in which the portfolio is managed."

Other Morgan Grenfell clients expressed concern at the seemingly endless catalogue of high profile disasters that have befallen the City investment house in the past six months. One cited the Peter

Young case in which the former manager of two European funds allegedly breached City rules on the way in which the funds were managed leaving Morgan Grenfell's parent company, Deutsche Bank, nursing a potential compensation and costs bill of some £400 million. Mr Young, who was dismissed last September for "gross misconduct" is the subject of a Serious Fraud Office investigation.

In another, separate, incident fund manager was suspended and subsequently dismissed for breaking Morgan Grenfell rules on dealing in shares on his own account. Other high profile pension funds clients of Morgan Grenfell include a number of local authorities such as Westminster City Council and Merton in south London.

Robert Smith, chief executive of Morgan Grenfell Asset Management, said yesterday that the firm stood by its actions in suspending Mrs

Horlick from her post on Tuesday. He said: "We are completely satisfied that we have acted properly."

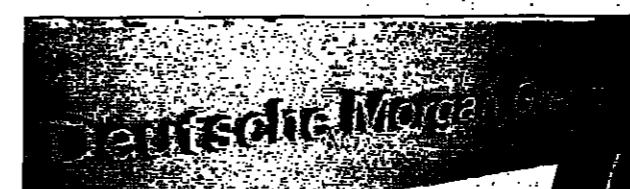
Meanwhile, Mrs Horlick has hired Anthony Carde, fast-becoming the Max Clifford of financial public relations. He wasted little time in turning a rapidly deteriorating situation to his client's advantage.

A strategically placed interview in the *Financial Times* was all it took to put Mrs Horlick back in control. Rival newspapers had little option

but to follow her words, reinforcing that first tactical strike with a succession of damaging volleys. Morgan Grenfell was in turn obliged to "leak" details of an internal memo to staff, in its desire to recapture the upper ground. Other clients with whom he works include Eurotunnel and British Aerospace.

SJ Berwin, solicitors, have never acted for Nicola Horlick, the former Deutsche Morgan Grenfell Asset Management Executive, as reported yesterday. Her solicitors are Herbert Smith.

Superwoman wins the day



Bank's German headquarters agreed to an inquiry

Continued from page 1

good for you", they said as she made for the boss' door.

But Mr Smith was not

there. After a quick conversation with the personnel manager, Martyn Drain, she led her entourage around the corner to the bank's HQ to confront the chairman, Michael Dobson.

From the foyer in Bishopsgate, she ran upstairs to say she would wait precisely 20 minutes. "After that I am going straight to Frankfurt."

Within 15 minutes, it was clear that there was to be no meeting and so, at 10.30, she headed back to Kensington to pick up her passport.

At 12.30 Ms Horlick was checking in at Heathrow and the 1 o'clock Lufthansa flight was surrounded by representatives from most national newspapers and ITN. In business class, she sipped sparkling water and told the 20 journalists that the charges against her were "completely trumped up".

"I am probably completely mad for doing this, but I have come this far and I have got to see it through," she said.

At Frankfurt German journalists were told: "I am here because I have been constructively dismissed and I want to be reinstated."

Then taxi to the Deutsche

Bank HQ and Ms Horlick

walked into the glass-fronted

building surrounded now by

at least 30 journalists.

Her arrival was not unexpected.

Heinz Schaefer, head of security, shook her hand, saying:

"Ms Horlick, would you like to

come up to a meeting to

the fifth floor room?"

Earlier, Ms Horlick said that Morgan Grenfell had paid no heed to the five and a half years "devoted service" she had given. She said management were well aware that for the past eight years her eldest child, Georgina, had been fighting acute leukaemia. Recently Georgina had suffered a relapse and was undergoing chemotherapy at Great Ormond Street Hospital.

"All my spare time goes on caring for children," she said. "I am simply not in a position where I could be thinking about starting all over again in a new job and to be

poaching staff for it. I need to feel secure. "I have a daughter who is sick, I have a huge mortgage and I owe a lot of money in tax due to a bonus I received last year. I need to be around the team that I love and trust. All I want is my job back."

She said that the family had suffered "real trauma" over Georgina's illness. During her recent relapse the child also fell victim to the so-called flesh eating virus necrotising fasciitis. Although she was now recovering she needed constant care and Ms Horlick's team at Morgan Grenfell had frequently stepped in to cover for her when she had to dash to the hospital at short notice.

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“...big benefits in ride and handling...”

“...smooth, crisp and punchy...”

“...impressive acceleration...”

“...bang up to date electronically...”

“...Significantly faster...”

“...a muted snarl...”



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Police hunting for missing Zoe Evans arrest her parents

By STEWART TENDLER

THE mother and stepfather of Zoe Evans were arrested yesterday as police continued to search for traces of the missing nine-year-old.

Last night Wiltshire police would only confirm they were holding a local man and woman. The arrests came after police visited their home in army married quarters in Warminster barracks.

Zoe disappeared last Saturday. Her parents saw her on Friday night when she was checked sleeping in bed. But she was seen the following morning by a schoolboy neighbour at a park.

The arrests were announced yesterday by Detective Superintendent Colin Dixon, head of Wiltshire CID. A planned press conference was suddenly cancelled in the morning because the case had reached "a crucial stage". Police had been intending to launch a fresh national appeal for help to find the child.

Mr Dixon said later that a



Zoe Evans: missing

couple were being held but added that a body had not been found and police still wanted help from people who may have seen the girl, who is of Asian appearance.

Earlier this week Paula Evans, 28, made a television appeal at a press conference, which was cut short when she was overcome with emotion and ran sobbing from the room. Her husband, Private Miles Evans, 22, a driver for the Royal Logistic Corps,

continued the appeal. Zoe will be 10 on January 27 and her parents said that a puppy dog would be waiting for her at home as an early present.

Flanked by Mr Dixon and another officer, Mr Evans appealed to his stepdaughter: "Zoe, we want you to come home. We all love you. You are just going to get lots of cuddles and hugs."

On Wednesday police found bloodstained clothing during searches of the Warminster area. One item was a girl's, another a male's. Police are awaiting forensic analysis of the blood.

Police were also trying to find a blond youth who was seen with the girl at the supermarket on Saturday afternoon. He was also believed to have followed her along a footpath to fields.

When Zoe was last seen, she was wearing a dark top and a black skirt. She had no coat and only £2 in cash. The Evanses married last August. Zoe's natural father lives in Malaysia.



Out of key: an apology by Brian Harvey, second right, failed to placate his colleagues

PC Coulton is charged over arms discovery

By DANIEL McGRORY

THE Royal Protection Officer whose wife was murdered in the grounds of the nursing home where she worked was last night charged with firearms offences over weapons found at his home. PC Michael Coulton will appear before magistrates in Woking, Surrey, today.

He is charged with possession of a prohibited weapon, shortening a shotgun and possession of a firearm with intent to cause another to believe unlawful violence would be used against them. The charges are unrelated to his wife's death. PC Coulton, 52, was arrested after allegedly pointing a shotgun at two detectives who visited his home in Woking. His wife Patricia worked at the Lyndwood nursing home, Sunninghill, near Ascot.

COPIES
Phillip Crawley, managing director of The Times Supplements Limited, has been appointed managing director of the New Zealand Herald, not managing editor, as incorrectly reported yesterday.

Bullimore says race is too dangerous

By DANIEL McGRORY

THE single-handed race that almost cost Tony Bullimore his life, and similar round-the-world competitions, are becoming too dangerous, the yachtsman admitted yesterday. He believes future events need "taming".

Mr Bullimore, 58, who spent four days trapped in the upturned hull of his yacht in the Southern Ocean, said competitors were sailing too far south and that yacht designs were risking competitors' lives.

He spoke as the Chilean air force said it may have made contact with Gerry Routs, a Canadian sailor who has been missing for ten days in the same race that has already seen Mr Bullimore and two others rescued. A search has been launched in the Cape Horn area.

Mr Bullimore voiced his reservations about such races in a BBC television interview last night. He said: "I think the organisers of the race have got to look deeply at the rules and regulations and may have to tame the race a bit, not allow the yachts to go so far south." He again pledged to try again "if I can get the right boat together".

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11 UNIT ANDOVER KITCHEN, 4 APPLIANCES AND INSTALLATION FOR JUST £2,450. Kitchen includes oven, hob, hood, dishwasher, sink and mixer tap, worktops, etc. All installed and connected to available services (plumbing, gas and electricity) and removal of old kitchen units.

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Nº 13
Lord of the Flies.

On Monday Waterstone's will be publishing an essential guide to 20th Century literature: the 100 greatest books of the century, as voted for by Waterstone's customers and Channel 4 viewers. How many of them will you have read? What will be at number one? And which books kept Golding's classic out of the top ten? To find out what some well known names think about the top 100, watch Book Choice on Channel 4 every evening next week at 7.55pm.

W

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Blair hopes 'Oxo mum' will beef up the female vote

BY ANDREW PIERCE, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

TONY BLAIR, who has already flattened his bouffant hairstyle to try to woo disaffected women voters, has now recruited an "Oxo mum" to try to complete the transformation.

Labour's spin-doctors, in an attempt to mirror Bill Clinton's appeal to women voters, unveiled their own version of the 40-year-old advertising industry icon in their party political broadcast on Thursday night. Helen, a harassed middle-class mother in despair at poor schools, rising crime and NHS hospital waiting lists, is the latest weapon in the battle for the elusive female vote. "She is going to be our very own Oxo mum," beamed a proud Labour Party official last night.

If audience reaction is favourable, 36-year-old Penny Bunting, star of *Grown Ups*, a BBC sitcom, could have a starring role until polling day. However, her contract is unlikely to last as

long as the Oxo matriarch, who has been crumbling cubes since 1958.

It could also be a high-risk strategy. The "real" Oxo mum, Lynda Bellingham, who has starred as the perfect wife and mother for the past ten years, announced earlier this year that her marriage of 15 years was over.

Bellingham, who replaced the homely Mary Holland, the original Katie, was further embarrassed when *Mayfair* magazine unearthed topless pictures of her in an X-rated film, *Confessions of a Driving Instructor*. As for Mary Holland, she has been heard of her since she was ousted from the kitchen table.

A Labour official said of Ms Bunting: "She is very much new Labour. She voted Tory in 1979, but she votes for Labour now." Not that the actress was prepared to discuss her views on any political matter, let alone Mr Blair's hairstyle. "She is not



Penny Bunting as she appears in the latest Labour Party broadcast

at all political and is not prepared to make any comments on her political views," a spokeswoman for her agents, Kerry Gardner Management, said.

The role of Helen in the Labour Party commercial is not her first in the political arena. She played a researcher in *The Politician's Wife*

who helped to expose her minister boss's marital affairs.

Labour officials have worked hard on Mr Blair's image with women after he was dubbed "smaffy" by his floating voter focus groups in Scotland last month. He has given interviews to magazines such as *Marie Claire* and *Bella* to try to improve his standing.

The jury is out on whether women will be impressed by Helen. But Brooke Bond, maker of Oxo, believes that its character may do the trick. "She has been a tremendous success with women for years," a spokeswoman said. "People love her."

Bishops pledge to speak their minds during election

BY RUTH GLEDHILL, RELIGION CORRESPONDENT, AND GLEN OWEN

BISHOPS in the Church of England pledged yesterday to speak out on political issues in the general election campaign.

The 53 bishops, who met privately this week in Liverpool, avowed their determination to fight for "a more just and holy world" as the election approached. The joint statement at such a politically sensitive time is thought to be unprecedented.

The bishops do not have a united political stance, but their determination to speak out for the homeless and unemployed means that, with few exceptions, many will be perceived as backing Labour.

"We intend to discuss and question the theological and ethical principles at stake in the election, as well as speak on specific issues where we have experience and knowledge," they said. "We share responsibility not just for individual souls but for tackling corporate sin and pointing to the spiritual goals of society as a whole."

The bishops, whose meeting was chaired by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, said that they affirmed "the importance and validity of the creation of a whole."

Christian conservatives have launched their own anti-Labour election campaign under the banner "new Labour, Christian values in danger" and featuring a picture of a dishevelled clergyman weeping a red tear. The Christian Fellowship will distribute leaflets to more than 5,000 churches arguing that Labour would damage Christian values, for example by possibly allowing homosexuals to marry, or by introducing euthanasia.

But they added: "At the same time we recall that each of us was charged at our consecration to have a special care for the outcast and needy. We must therefore be advocates for those who are excluded from access to well-being or influence in society, such as the homeless and the unemployed, young and old alike, and the mentally ill."

The statement comes a few days after five English bishops issued statements which were sympathetic to the Labour Party, and the Most Rev Richard Holloway, Bishop of Edinburgh, came out in open advocacy of Labour.

A more measured view came last week from the Archbishop of York, Dr David Hope, who said that more

At Your Service, Weekend, page 13

must be made of Britain's successes and achievements over the past two decades.

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A spokesman for the Christian Socialist Movement condemned the campaign. "To say that new Labour represents a threat to Christian values is scaremongering. We will be pushing better jobs, better housing, and better health care."

Straw denies pressure to make bugging U-turn

BY FRANCES GIBB AND ALICE THOMSON

JACK STRAW was forced to deny yesterday that he had bowed to pressure from Labour backbenchers and staged a U-turn over bugging.

The Shadow Home Secretary was accused of abandoning his hardline stance on crime by trying to curtail chief constables' power to authorise break-ins and bugging.

At present the Bill gives chief constables wide powers to bug civilians. Labour's proposals would force the police to seek prior consent from a commissioner — a senior judge — before authorising a surveillance operation. They would also increase protection for lawyers, doctors and journalists.

Lord Bingham, of Cornhill, the Lord-Chief Justice, and leading Tory peers yesterday, made it clear that they were likely to vote with Labour. They and senior judges such as Lord Brown-Wilkinson will effectively decide the outcome of the vote. Lord Alexander of Weedon, QC, the Conservative peer and a former chairman of the Bar Council, said he did not believe the Government amendments to the Police Bill "meet the concerns at all".

Leading article, page 23

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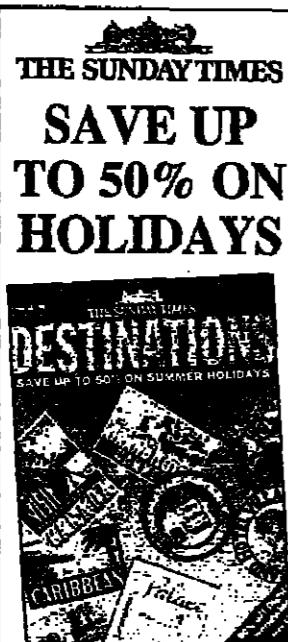
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Bludgeoned wife's lover collapses in family murder trial

BY PAUL WILKINSON

THE lover of Eve Howells, the woman whose husband and sons are charged with her murder, collapsed in court yesterday as he was about to tell of their 12-year affair.

Russell Hirst slumped forward in the witness box on the second day of the trial of Mrs Howells' husband, David, and their teenage sons, Glenn and John. Mr Hirst, 38, had told the jury at Leeds Crown Court that he had known the family for 20 years since he started as an apprentice fitter working for Mr Howells at a chemical plant in Huddersfield, west Yorkshire.

He had become a close family friend and gone on holiday with them, he said. But, as Franz Muller, for the prosecution, questioned him about his involvement with the Howellses, he asked for a glass of water before falling forward on to his arms. A court usher cradled his head as a first-aider was called.

Then the burly, 6ft Mr Hirst was laid out, apparently unconscious, alongside the public gallery.

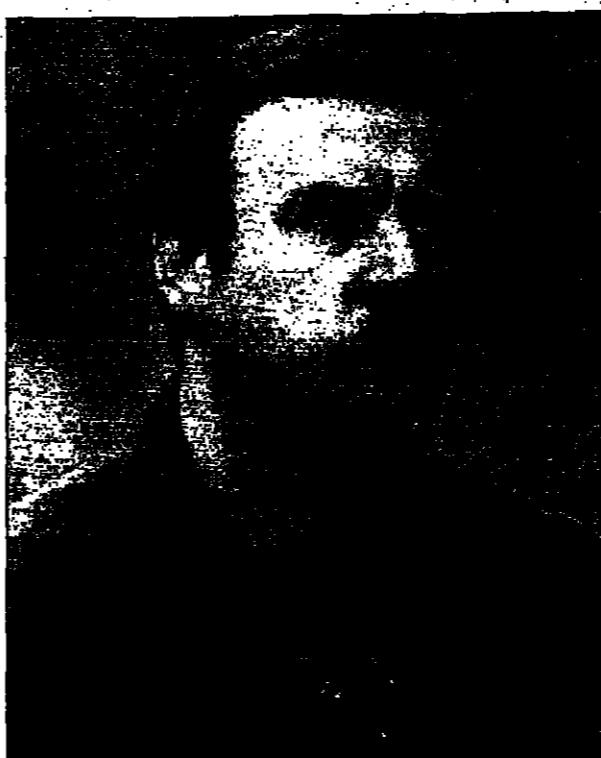
The court was cleared and, after ten minutes, Mr Hirst walked with assistance to the restaurant. The trial resumed 20 minutes later. Mr Justice Alliott, the trial judge, told the jury that Mr Hirst had gone to Leeds General Infirmary for checks. The judge said: "I have been told it was nothing worse than a faint. I was following his statement and the poor chap was just one line away from admitting his adultery, so perhaps it was not surprising."

Later the judge said that, on doctor's advice, Mr Hirst would not give evidence until Monday. The trial has already heard that Mr Howells, 47, had told detectives he was unaware of the affair, but had told a cellmate while on remand that he discovered the relationship two months be-

fore his 48-year-old wife's death on the night of August 31, 1990. She died under a hail of blows to the head from a stonemason's hammer as she sat in the living room at their bungalow in Huddersfield.

Mr Howells, a maintenance fitter, and his sons, who were 15 and 14 at the time, have denied murder. Glenn Howells, now 17, has admitted manslaughter because of provocation by his mother, who he claims mentally and emotionally abused him for five years. Initially the boys said that she had been killed by an intruder while they walked their dog and Mr Howells played darts.

The prosecution claims that Mr Howells and his sons plotted to kill Mrs Howells, a history and religious instruction teacher at Newsome High School in Huddersfield, because of her domineering and tyrannical ways. While the boys carried out the kill-



Russell Hirst arrives at court yesterday before collapsing as he was about to tell of his affair with Mrs Howells

ing, Mr Howells set up an alibi at the darts match, it was alleged.

Yesterday Jamesens Stevewright, Mrs Howells's aunt, said that, shortly after the killing, she had visited the family at the hotel where they were staying. She said: "David told me he and Russell Hirst had gone to sleep on the bed crying."

Mr Howells had just been to

identify his wife in the mortuary. She said: "He said, 'She was lovely, she was beautiful, beautiful,' but the look in his eyes ... my spine chilled. I have never experienced anything like it before."

Earlier, John Chadwick, Mrs Howells's head of department, had said he was unaware of her nickname at school of "Evil" Howells. He said she was often sharp with



friend of Glenn Howells, said under cross-examinations that the brothers were expected to do their own washing and ironing and clean their bedrooms. Mrs Howells would subject it to a military-style inspection. He agreed that they could be banned from going out for at least a week for such offences as leaving a apple core in their room.

The hearing continues.

Anthony Polan, a school-

Small Latin and less Greek for pupils of future

BY JOHN O'LEARY, EDUCATION EDITOR

LATIN and Greek will dwindle further in comprehensive school sixth-forms as a result of new limits next year on A-level syllabuses.

Coursework is limited to 20 per cent at A-level, but independent schools, which provide the majority of candidates in Classics, opt mainly for wholly examined syllabuses.

Peter Jones, a founder of Friends of the Classics and lecturer in the subject at Newcastle University, said: "With so much variation in pupils' experience of Latin and Greek below the sixth form, that element of coursework can make all the difference."

A spokeswoman for the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority said a reduction in the number of syllabuses would make it easier to guarantee standards. The authority felt that one syllabus per board was adequate for subjects with a small entry, but would not act unreasonably if there was evidence that a subject might be damaged.

Nick Tate, the chief executive, appealed to state schools last year not to abandon classical studies. He said Latin and Greek were part of the "cement which holds together the consciousness of nation".

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Celebration of children's festival affirms our quest for knowledge

THE religious quest is the search for knowledge in a world which grows more complex every day. Sacred texts guide us, but we need instruction from other sources as well. The ancients found inspiration in nature, which they peopled with many gods; even trees had dryads which could inspire humans. The Garden of Eden contained the Tree of Knowledge as well as the Tree of Life.

Next week, Jews celebrate *Tu B'Shvat* — the New Year of the Trees. Most religions

have some kind of observance where ancient traditions emerge to remind us that we are part of nature and often depend on the bounties of the earth for sustenance. This festival, which bids us to eat the fruit of many trees, fits that pattern.

The fifteenth day of the month of *Sh'vat*, at the end of the rainy season, was the time of determining the tithes for all the fruit of trees which blossom before *Tu B'Shvat*. It was a minor harvest feast, which developed in two ways: as a feast for the

mystics, with a special prayerbook possibly compiled by Nathan of Gaza, the 'prophet' of the pseudo messianic Shabbatai Zevi; and as a happy folk observance.

In earlier days, Sephardic communities, in Baghdad, for example, made it a family occasion. Little sacks embroidered with their children's names and filled with sugared almonds and hazelnuts were hung around their necks. In well-to-do homes, one tried to collect 50 different kinds of fruit for a banquet where each guest

read a paragraph from a special text and was given a fruit for which he said the appropriate blessing. Even now, a night of study may take place where texts from the Bible, the Talmud and the mystic *Zohar* book are studied.

Why this emphasis on study? Perhaps, here, we

come to that other pillar of Jewish life which belongs to all our religious observances: study as part of worship and as part of our home life. 'The Torah,' says our liturgy, 'is the Tree of Life.' Somehow, we are transported back to the Garden of Eden, to the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life that grow in its

centre. As the Bible and our own experience inform us, everlasting life is beyond us: we cannot be like gods. But we can sit around the Tree of Knowledge and know good from evil, and we come to recognise that its fruits will always sustain us. Celebrations may then contain a special insight into the human condition.

Tu B'Shvat is no longer a mystic feast celebrated by scholars. It has become even more a children's festival, and there is the recognition

that the quest for knowledge begins with the child and is a joyous affirmation of a tradition of learning which commences at the very beginning. The children of Jerusalem have a school holiday, go into the fields and plant trees, and share this feast with Jewish children throughout the world.

The Diaspora has also created happy rituals which convey that knowledge is not only acquired in books but in the woods and gardens. We cannot return to the Garden of Eden, to Paradise and the

actual Tree of Knowledge. But, on this festival, the thought may come to us that Eve was right in forcing Adam to eat that fatal apple. We cannot live without the quest for knowledge. Adam and Eve had to leave the 'Garden of Eden', their kindergarten, so that their children could grow, develop, and eat the fruit of knowledge.

Albert Friedlander is Dean of Leo Baeck College and Rabbi of Westminster Synagogue

Defender of the faith

A FORMER professional footballer who swapped his boots for the Bible is to return as a vicar in the town where he played. The Rev Peter Hart, former captain of Walsall FC, will take charge of St Martin's Church.

Mr Hart, who is married with two daughters, made 472 appearances as a defender for the club. He began a theology course in 1990 and later served as a curate in Derbyshire.

Mr Hart, 39, takes up his new post in May. He hopes to return to the Second Division club's Bescot Stadium — on the terraces, rather than the pitch.

"It's very exciting to be coming back," he said. "I've got lots of happy memories from my time with Walsall. I gave up football gladly when I got my new vocation, but the game's always popping up when I tell my life story and of how I became a Christian."



Samuel Johnson, whose low opinion of women preachers still pervades more than 200 years later

Women preachers suffer as men turn a deaf ear

BY RUTH GLEDHILL
RELIGION CORRESPONDENT

MALE worshippers' dislike of being told what to do by a female is making life difficult for women preachers, according to a report published this month.

Research into the problems faced by women preachers has revealed that many are faced with ambivalence or even hostility from men in the congregation. Men are uncomfortable with women in authority 'because of the instinctive feelings of infantile dependency they engender', the research suggests.

The report, published in the 1997 fellowship paper of the College of Preachers, comes nearly three years after the first women were ordained to

the priesthood in the Church of England, although women were preaching from Anglican and Methodist pulpits for decades before that. But, prompting the question of how much, if anything, has changed, it comes more than two centuries after Samuel Johnson said: 'A woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hinder legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all.'

Of the entries so far to this year's *Times*/College of Preachers Preacher of the Year award, about one fifth are women. In the previous two years, at least one woman has made the final five or six.

The report, by Canon Peter Kerr, of the Church of Ireland, is based on the results of

surveys of episcopal congregations in America. The research, by Professor Lee McGeehee of Yale Divinity School, is based on surveys carried out in 1979 and 1994 and examines how congregations listen to and perceive women's preaching.

Canon Kerr said: 'There would seem to be definite differences in the way people listen to men and women in the pulpit, though these are less marked in the later survey, perhaps because congregations are more used to women preachers.'

But he says there were differences. 'The content of women's preaching was described as personal and innovative whereas men preached scholarly, informative and knowledgeable ser-

Dying man is granted Ireland's first divorce

BY AUDREY MAGEE

THE first divorce in the history of the Irish Republic was granted yesterday to a terminally ill man who wants to marry again before he dies.

The case in the High Court in Dublin ends Ireland's centuries-old ban. It was the last country in the European Union to introduce divorce.

The man, who cannot be named, is aged 68 and is believed to have a brain tumour. He wanted to divorce his first wife in the hope of settling all financial and legal matters with his long-term partner before his death. He has three adult children with his wife and a daughter with his lover.

But he feared he would be dead before legislation permitting divorce came into effect. Although the Irish voted in November 1995 to allow divorce, the Family Law (Divorce) 1996 Act does not take effect until February 27.

The man claimed his constitutional rights were being infringed by the Irish Government's failure to introduce the legislation in time for him to divorce and remarry. Judge Henry Barron agreed and granted the divorce, which was not contested.

The man, his wife and lover live close to one another in south Dublin. They are on friendly terms. The man and his partner are professionals who run their practice in a building owned by the wife.

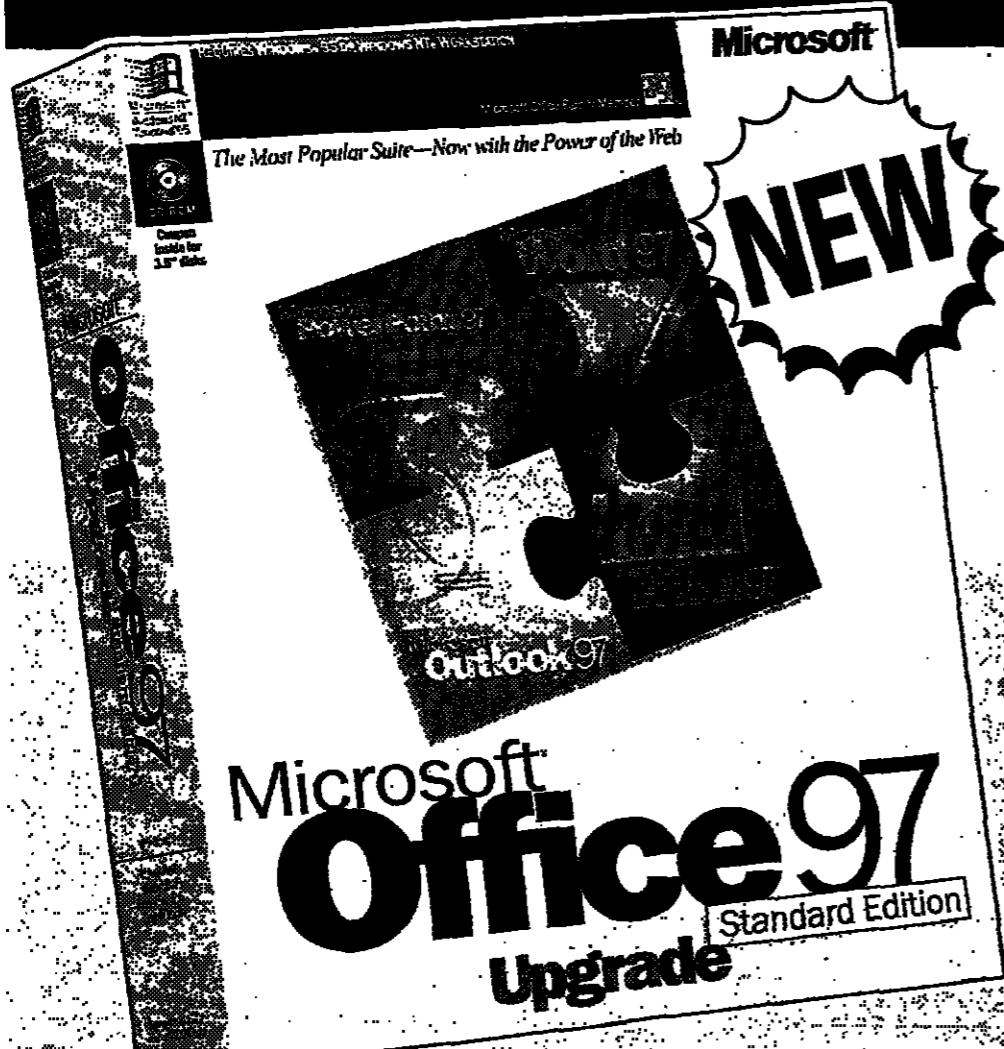
Divorce had once been commonplace in Ireland under Brehon law. But the arrival from Rome of St Patrick and Palladius, the first bishop to Ireland, in the 5th century, led to Brehon laws being replaced by Christian ones.

Yesterday's decision was welcomed by divorce groups. An estimated 80,000 people are separated in Ireland and many are awaiting divorce.

The Catholic Church said it accepted divorce was now inevitable. The Church accepts that decision and we will work with the law."

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Radio 1 tipped to wake up with the 'new John Peel'

BY ALEXANDRA FREAN, MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

MARK RADCLIFFE, the Radio 1 disc jockey, emerged yesterday as favourite to replace Chris Evans on the breakfast show, ahead of a rival from the commercial sector, Steve Penk.

Also tipped for Evans's job were the award-winning Russ 'n' Jono (Russ Williams and Jonathan Coleman) from Virgin Radio. They may prove too costly, however, as they are believed to have loyalty bonuses written into their contracts.

Radio 1 advertised yesterday for Evans's replacement on an electronic billboard in Piccadilly Circus. He resigned on Thursday after Matthew Bannister, the Radio 1 controller, refused to let him work a four-day week.

There are few tried and tested presenters in his league, despite the huge growth in commercial radio this decade: there are now 178 local and three national commercial stations.

Radcliffe presents a Radio 1 show from 10pm to midnight on weekdays, with a broad mix of indie music and poetry. Steve Penk joined the London



Radcliffe: he may not fit show's madcap image

station Capital FM last September to present the mid-morning show. He is being groomed as the eventual successor to the station's veteran breakfast host, Chris Tarrant.

Like Radcliffe, Penk is a Mancunian who cut his broadcasting teeth by working for the independent station Piccadilly. He was signed by Capital for an estimated £150,000 a year after a bidding contest with another London station, Heart.

One of Penk's most notorious pranks on Piccadilly was "spousal arousal", in which women telephoned their husbands at work and pleaded with them to return home for sex. The calls were broadcast live and ended with Penk bursting in with the words "Surprise!"

Radcliffe emerged from the "Madchester" music scene in the 1980s and was a producer at Piccadilly. His stint as presenter of *The White Room*, a critically acclaimed Channel 4 music programme, strengthened his credibility in the music business, where he is known as "the new John Peel".

needed him to diffuse pressure he was put under by the BBC governors and to publicise the fact that Radio 1 was no longer naff. He was the hook around which they repositioned the public image of the station."

Evans leaves on March 27. Mr Bannister's advertisement in Piccadilly read: "Wanted: Radio 1 breakfast show disc jockey. Must work five days a week. Ginger hair an advantage. Apply Radio 1."

Evans, who opened his show yesterday with *Please Release Me*, took the opportunity to advertise himself and his team: "If somebody wants to offer us a job Monday to Thursday we'd love to do it," he said.

He is unlikely to be short of work for long. Virgin Radio and Talk Radio are keen to hire him. Also, Evans's company, Ginger Productions, is understood to be negotiating with Channel 4 to produce his television show, *TFI Friday*, three nights a week.

Ginger Productions is also rumoured to be lobbying hard for the contract to make Channel 4's *Big Breakfast*, which has lost viewers since Evans quit as a presenter.



Chris Evans leaving Radio 1 yesterday. His first record was *Please Release Me*.

File on Duke of York left in stolen naval car

BY DANIEL McGROarty

CONFIDENTIAL records about the Royal Navy's plan to promote the Duke of York before he leaves the service have been found by police after they were stolen from an Admiral's chauffeur-driven car.

The Rover 820 was taken after the navy driver left the engine running while he went into a shop at Gosport, Hampshire, to buy a newspaper. On the front seat was a briefcase containing more than 200 staff records, including recommendations about the Duke's suitability for promotion, and remarks by senior figures about his character.

Defence officials admitted yesterday to being deeply embarrassed by the incident, which echoed the theft in 1990 of the Gulf War Allies' secret battle plan to defeat Saddam Hussein, when a wing commander left his vehicle to visit a car showroom.

A senior navy source said: "While there was nothing top secret, there was information which in the wrong hands would have caused a lot of very red faces in Whitehall."

The briefcase was found by a police dog, some distance from the car, which had been abandoned yards away in the town centre. The Navy leading hand who mislaid his vehicle now faces a court martial. The Ministry of Defence said: "We are just grateful to have got everything back intact."

The vehicle taken in Gosport was used by Vice-Admiral John Brigstocke, who is Flag Officer Surface Flotilla and in charge of the Navy's 100 surface vessels. It is understood Admiral Brigstocke had the confidential staff reports because he sits on promotion boards.

The Duke's report will say whether officers thought he had the right attributes for promotion from lieutenant-commander to commander and the reasons why he was suitable or not.

The Duke started in a new post at the Ministry of Defence this week after announcing that he intended to leave the Navy in 1999 after completing 20 years' service. Navy sources said last night that the Duke was eligible for promotion up until the moment he handed in his written resignation.

Detention for attacker of DPP's husband

BY ADRIAN LEE

A TEENAGER who stabbed and almost killed the husband of the Director of Public Prosecutions was sent to a young offenders' institution for eight years yesterday. A judge said he had a duty to impose a stern sentence to deter those who routinely carry knives.

The youth, now aged 17, pushed the blade deep into the stomach of John Mills, whose wife, Barbara, is the DPP, severing an artery and piercing his liver. Only prompt action by two policemen saved his life and Mr Mills, 53, a businessman, has since made a full recovery.

Judge Pownall said Mr Mills had been trying to attract the attention of the youth, who cannot be named, before the attack in May 1995 in a north London street. He was stabbed with a butterfly knife, a double-bladed martial arts weapon.

The judge condemned the teenager, who has a previous conviction of wounding and robbery, for brazening out a lengthy trial. He said his claims of remorse rang hollow. "It seems you are someone who is all too ready to use violence on others."

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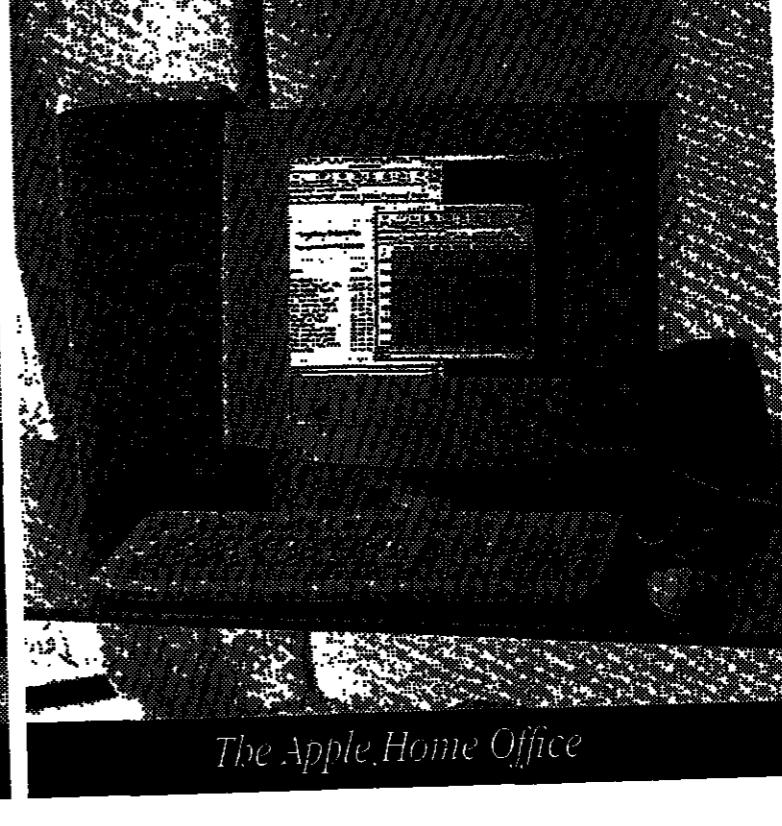
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Council ruffles feathers in battle of Trafalgar Square

By MICHAEL HORNSEY

AN ATTEMPT to evict Trafalgar Square's pigeons by starving them into submission was set in train yesterday by Westminster City Council, which says that the birds are damaging buildings and spreading disease.

However, the pampered fowl have been defended by the London Tourist Board and the Department of National Heritage, which is responsible for the square. They argue that pigeons are as much part of the scenery as Nelson's Column.

The council's environment sub-committee has voted to ask the Heritage Department to rescind the licence of the square's one authorised birdseed seller. The council also wants the square to be included in a general ban on pigeon feeding throughout the borough. It is to ask the Home Office for permission to pass a bylaw to that effect.

Jonathan Lord, the chairman of the sub-committee, said: "We know the birds are popular with visitors, but we receive a steady stream of complaints from residents. At



Trafalgar Square's sole licensed birdseed vendor may have his permit rescinded by the council

least 10 per cent of the birds carry diseases such as salmonella and tuberculosis. Their acidic droppings damage buildings and statues. More than a ton is removed every year from Nelson's Column alone. We would like a bylaw banning the feeding of pigeons in public spaces which would be enforced with fines of, say, £40 to £50 for a first offence.

The aim would be to reduce the birds' numbers, not to get rid of them.

The main target would be the persistent offenders, the little old ladies who are out

every day with bags of breadcrumbs, which they often dump still half-full, creating a food supply for rats."

Louise Wood, of the tourist board, said visitors to London would be hugely disappointed if bird feeding were stopped. She said: "Trafalgar Square must be one of the most photographed sites in the world and tourists come expecting to feed the pigeons."

The Heritage Department said it had no plans to revoke the licence of the seed vendor, which has two more years to run before it comes up for

review. "Trafalgar Square is a landmark site, a major tourist attraction, and the pigeons are part of it," a spokeswoman said. "It is better to encourage people to feed the birds with seed than with bits of ham, burger and sandwiches." The department spends £100,000 a year hosing down the square.

Bernard Rayner, the current holder of the seed vendor's licence, did not look like a man whose job was under threat yesterday. "My family have been selling seeds here for 50 years. The pigeons are part of our heritage," he said. Mr Rayner, who charges 25p for a teacup-sized pot of birdseed, was coy about how much he made each year, but said it afforded a comfortable living.

After posing for a photograph with a pigeon on his head, Scott Means, a computer specialist from Florida on holiday in London with his wife and daughter, said: "It is all part of the appeal of the place. I would be very upset if I could not feed the birds." But Bernd Schmidt, a hygienic-conscious German student, said he could do without the birds. "Very dirty," he said, wrinkling his nose.



The pigeons' backers include the London Tourist Board, which says visitors expect to feed the birds

NEWS IN BRIEF

Barking fine for couple with six dogs

A couple whose six barking dogs annoyed neighbours for 18 months were ordered to pay fines and costs of £3,790 by magistrates at Wigan, Greater Manchester. Six residents living near David Mann and Kelly Lomas in Leigh contacted the local council complaining that the noise of the border collies made it impossible to read, watch television or sleep. The couple have since moved away.

Girl raped on way to school

A 15-year-old girl was raped at knifepoint inside a derelict garage after stopping for a cigarette on her way to school. She had walked a few yards off the footpath leading to her school in Framlingham, Suffolk, when she was confronted by a man wearing a balaclava. He ran off towards the town centre after the attack and the girl then managed to alert teachers.

Prison for charity swindler

A woman who stole thousands of pounds from the national cot death charity she launched was jailed for 11 months yesterday by Liverpool Crown Court. Susan Howe, 43, of Formby, Merseyside, denied 19 charges of stealing a total of £36,872 from the Cot Death Society, but was found guilty of 15 of them at her trial last month. She launched the charity in 1991 after a friend's child died.

Spector waits for decision

Judgement was reserved yesterday in a High Court action over the rights to the pop song *To Know Him is to Love Him*. The 1950s hit was written by Phil Spector, 57, who is fighting the British-based Bourne Music Ltd for return of the rights. He is also claiming hundreds of thousands of pounds in royalties. Mr Justice Ferris did not say when he would give his ruling.

BBC man changes channel

The leading BBC foreign correspondent, Tim Sebastian, is leaving to become diplomatic editor of Channel 5 News. Mr Sebastian, who has worked in Moscow, Washington and Eastern Europe for the corporation and currently presents *Newsdesk*, the BBC World channel's morning news show, will start his new job next month.

Eurostar smuggler in court

A French law student, who was paid £600 to smuggle two kilograms of heroin, worth £165,000, through the Channel Tunnel, was sent to a young offender institution for five years. Southwark Crown Court was told that Virginia Gaze, 19, from Beauvais, Paris, was caught by a routine customs check last October. She pleaded guilty.

Watchman jailed over fire

A security guard who caused a £1.5 million fire at a warehouse in Stockton-on-Tees was jailed for 27 months by Teesside Crown Court. Philip Green, 28, of Middlesbrough, used his cigarette lighter to look around after his torch failed. He fell and started fires in two places. He admitted reckless arson.

Gilbey wins libel damages

James Gilbey, left, a friend of Diana, Princess of Wales, accepted undisclosed libel damages over an article in the *Independent on Sunday* last August which gave the false impression that he had been trying to sell his story to the media. Newspaper Publishing and Peter Wilby, former Editor, said that they had confused Mr Gilbey with someone else.

Deaths rise in cold spell

The cold weather led to a big increase in the number of deaths registered in England and Wales. Figures from the Office for National Statistics showed there were 19,553 deaths during the week ending January 10, nearly 6,000 above the average for this time of year. A week earlier the figure was 18,616.

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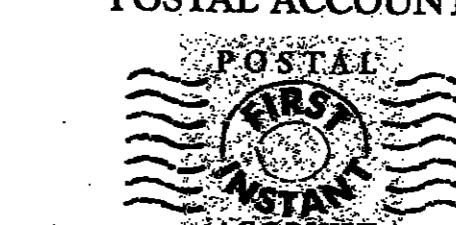
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Threat of violence returns to Hebron hours after pullout

FROM CHRISTOPHER WALKER IN HEBRON

ISRAEL withdrew its troops from most of Hebron at dawn yesterday, but within hours the signs of conflict had returned.

A curfew was clamped on Palestinians living near the remaining Jewish settlers and Arabs chanted the praises of Yihye Ayyash, the "master of the suicide bomb".

As leaders of the 450 settlers rent their clothes in grief for the loss of part of their homeland to *hablum* (terrorists), the 100,000 Arabs freed from military occupation after 30 years set off fireworks and toured cells in the British-built military headquarters where many had been imprisoned.

Despite the portraits of Yassir Arafat, the President of the Palestinian Authority, now displayed at road sides, many of the newly liberal Hebronites did little to disguise the fact that their true loyalties lay with Hamas, the militant Islamic group which opposed the deal that gave them freedom.

In the shadow of the imposing Tegart Fort (named after a British Mandate security

chief, Charles Tegart) which had been Israeli military headquarters until its transfer at 6.10am, Palestinian policemen looked on benignly as chants in memory of Ayyash ("The Engineer"), the murdered Hamas bomb-maker, filled the air.

Had the Jewish settlers living in heavily fortified buildings in the heart of the city below been present, their paranoia about the future would have been intensified.

"Ayyash, Ayyash, we will be joining you in paradise," sang an impromptu choir of young men with unsmiling eyes and women in Islamic headscarves, more common in Hebron than elsewhere in the West Bank. "The Israeli occupiers should never forget: we are all Ayyash."

Even the most respectable of those who had come to the abandoned symbol of foreign rule, now sporting a Palestinian flag on its 80ft antenna, had stories to tell of hardships under the Israeli occupiers who seized control from Jordan in the 1967 Six-Day War.

Dr Anwan Maswadeh, a



A rabbi helps a Hebron settler to tear his shirt in ritual mourning over the handover of the city to Palestinian rule



Riot police bar a lone protester's way to the Myeongdong cathedral yesterday

Seoul police ring cathedral

FROM REUTER IN SEOUL

SOUTH KOREAN police yesterday tightened a security noose around a Seoul cathedral where a strike leader was hiding from arrest, and the ruling party scorned an offer by the fugitive for a televised debate.

"It is a day of shame for Netanyahu, who caved in to US pressure," Mrs Cohen said. She pointed to the large swath of the City of the Patriarchs now under Palestinian control. "It is the beginning of a Palestinian state. I am sure we [the Israelis] will come again and free it again, but only in a very bloody war."

The "grabbers"—hardened by years of street fighting—are deployed during riots to

rush into crowds and make arrests. South Korea's Roman Catholic cardinal appealed to President Kim to "resolve the situation with dialogue", a presidential spokesman said.

Kwon Young Kil, the strike leader and president of the outlawed Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, challenged Lee Hong Koo, the chairman of the New Korean Party, to a debate over the new labour law that has sparked more than three weeks of stoppages. Mr Kwon called on the party chairman

personally to square off with him on camera. He also demanded that the Government must guarantee his safety from arrest.

The New Korea Party rejected the offer, on the ground that Mr Kwon was a fugitive, and called on unions to put forward more suitable candidates. "There cannot be guarantees of safety for people who have legal problems," the party said. The strikes were wound down last night and there were just pockets of worker resistance.

Spain retreats on Rock passports

Madrid: Spain denied yesterday that it is soon to stop recognising passports issued in Gibraltar (Tunku Varadarajan writes). The announcement was an attempt to close a growing rift between Spain and Britain over the Rock.

The prospect of the Spanish treating as obsolete a 1960 Anglo-Spanish visa-waiver treaty, under which Gibraltarians acquired the right to travel freely to Spain, had sent shock waves through the Rock this week. Yesterday Madrid climbed down, saying the Government was "only studying the possibility of changes to the treaty". Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, is to visit Gibraltar next week and hold talks with Abel Matutes, his Spanish counterpart.

Timor murder plot 'foiled'

Sydney: Supporters of Bishop Carlos Belo, the Nobel Peace Prize winner, foiled a plot to assassinate him in Dili, the capital of East Timor, by beating to death an Indonesian soldier on Christmas Eve, Hilton Deakin, the Catholic Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne, said. The news was given in a fax from a prominent East Timor Roman Catholic. Indonesian troops invaded the former Portuguese colony in 1975 and made it their 27th province in 1976. The move has not been recognised by the United Nations. (Reuters)

Serb politician's suicide bid

Pale: Doctors battled to save the former Bosnian Serb Vice-President, Nikola Koljevic, who was in a coma yesterday after shooting himself in the head in a suicide attempt, political sources said. Mr Koljevic, 60, a Shakespeare scholar and former Sarajevo University professor, shot himself in his office in the seat of the Serb republic's Government at Pale. Dense fog prevented doctors from flying Mr Koljevic to Belgrade immediately after the shooting. (Reuters)

Maputo backs game park

Maputo: Mozambique has granted final approval for a private game reserve which the US-based company behind the project claims is the largest in the world. The scheme encompasses 580,000 acres in the Maputaland region of southern Mozambique. Blanchard Mozambique Enterprises said US millionaire James Blanchard presented an outline of the project to President Chissano in 1995. (Reuters)

Montenegrin minister dies

Belgrade: Janko Jeknic, Foreign Minister of the Yugoslav republic of Montenegro, died in a road accident. He was 46. Mr Jeknic's car collided with a bus outside the capital, Podgorica. He had served as head of protocol and consul for economic affairs in the Yugoslav consulate in Milan, Italy, before becoming Foreign Minister. (Reuters)

Reeve back in hospital

New York: The wheelchair-bound actor Christopher Reeve was admitted to hospital with a blood clot behind his knee (Quentin Letts writes). Mr Reeve, the former *Superman* star disabled in a horse-riding accident two years ago, is likely to be kept under observation for a few days before going home.

THE SUNDAY TIMES

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MURRAY ON CRIME

"The way to restore a lawful society is to impose swift and sure punishment." Charles Murray—the social commentator who identified the Underclass—in the final part of a major series on crime and punishment.

AFTER IMRAN'S BLOOD

"I'm sorry if this brings him down, but..." Sita White talks exclusively about her paternity battle with Imran Khan.



Gingrich remains defiant in face of \$300,000 penalty

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

LAWYERS agreed last night that Newt Gingrich should be ordered to pay a penalty of \$300,000 (£180,000) after the special counsel investigating ethics charges against the House Speaker released a highly condemnatory report.

The size of the recommended fine is likely to dramatise for Americans the serious nature of Mr Gingrich's admitted ethics violations. But it will not prompt him to resign, as many Democrats had hoped.

James Cole, who recommended a hefty fine a reprimand and a federal investigation, agreed tentatively with lawyers representing Mr Gingrich that he should pay \$300,000 and be admonished in writing by his colleagues when the House votes on the issue next week.

The large financial penalty has been designed to reimburse the ethics committee for extra work done as a result of inaccurate statements submitted under the Speaker's name.

The fine comes to nearly twice the Speaker's annual salary of \$171,500, and is much higher than Mr Gingrich and his colleagues had expected. If the House votes to sanction the penalty against Mr Gingrich on Tuesday, he will be the first Speaker ever disciplined by his peers. Only two weeks ago he became the first Repub-

lican re-elected to the office in 68 years.

Republicans said that the agreement between the lawyers had been reached during a private session of the House ethics committee yesterday in which members had reviewed the 200-page document, the culmination of a year-long inquiry by Mr Cole.

The report, the critical element in the committee's investigation of whether Mr Gingrich had misused charitable donations for political purposes, was distributed to all 435 members of the House last night as public hearings into the matter opened.

Part of the document was said to recommend a full inquiry by the Justice Department on the apparent use of charitable contributions for partisan political purposes.

Last night Republicans were playing down the size of the penalty and privately were hoping that the impending inauguration of President Clinton would overshadow any political damage before the Tuesday vote.

The Democrats had been dealt a public relations disaster from their own ranks earlier in the week when Jim McDermott, the leading Democrat on the ethics committee, was forced to resign from the inquiry. Mr McDermott was accused by his opponents of

deliberately leaking an illegally recorded tape involving Mr Gingrich to several leading American newspapers and the FBI announced an immediate investigation. His resignation deflected the worst embarrassments of the Gingrich affair and Republicans were able both to truncate the public hearings and to ensure that Mr Cole's evidence was kept to a minimum.

Nevertheless, as speculation increased on Capitol Hill last night in advance of the report's release, Mr Gingrich's allies were hoping that the special counsel had gone no further in his comments than a statement of violation issued last month, which said that Mr Gingrich should have taken legal advice about the use of tax-exempt funds.

It cited conflicting remarks by him about whether his political action committee had received money from non-profit groups, whether it was involved in financing a college course he was teaching and whether the course had partisan objectives.

Regardless of the ultimate outcome of the ethics case, Mr Gingrich was left severely wounded by the process. A new cadre of ambitious Republicans is already emerging to fill the vacuum left by the mastermind of the Republican revolution.

American rocket explodes in fireball

FROM IAN BRODIE
IN WASHINGTON

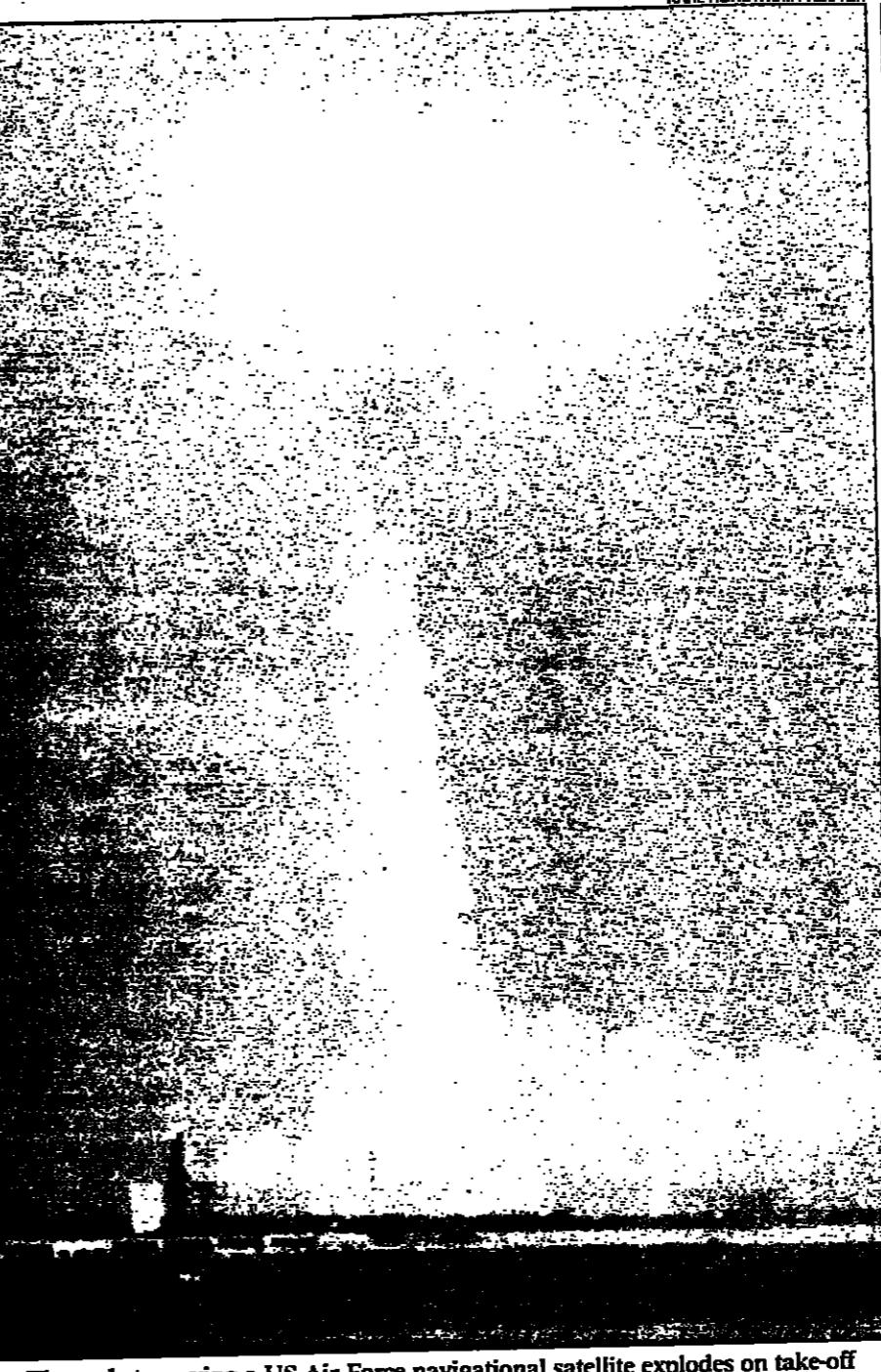
A DELTA-2 rocket exploded spectacularly on take-off from Cape Canaveral yesterday. A shower of fireballs rained down on the space centre, and smoke was still billowing from the launch pad half an hour later. The rocket, built by McDonnell Douglas Corporation, was carrying a global positioning satellite worth \$35 million (£34 million) into orbit for the US Air Force.

Larry McCracken, a spokesman for McDonnell Douglas, said the explosion of the three-stage rocket occurred less than four seconds into the flight and even before the rocket had cleared the tower to which it had been tethered for the launch.

Karl Ronstrom, a photographer who was taking pictures of the launch from a distance of two miles, said that after the main explosion he heard four or more minor explosions, along with the smoke and fireballs.

The Air Force had no immediate explanation for the explosion, but ordered an investigation. No one was hurt. The launch had been delayed from Thursday because of high winds.

The Delta is regarded as the world's most reliable rocket. It has been in use since 1960, and yesterday's launch was the 241st, of which fewer than ten have failed to reach orbit. The last one to explode was in May, 1986.



The rocket carrying a US Air Force navigational satellite explodes on take-off

Fujimori hints at talks on prisoners

FROM GABRIELLA GAMINI
SOUTH AMERICA
CORRESPONDENT

PRESIDENT FUJIMORI of Peru yesterday indicated that he is prepared to discuss the Tupac Amaru rebels' demand for the release of hundreds of their imprisoned comrades.

Señor Fujimori told a Japanese television network that the subject may be among issues to be discussed in formal talks that are due to start next week. However, the President maintained his characteristic tough line and said the "Government cannot approve such a liberation".

The rebels released last night one hostage from the Lima residence of the Japanese Ambassador, the first to be freed since the beginning of the year. He was Luis Valencia Gerano, a former chief of Peru's anti-terrorist police. Seventy-three hostages remain in captivity.

The rebels have agreed to participate in talks with the Government only if the release of fellow guerrillas was on the agenda. Western diplomats in Lima said the talks would be held in a church in the capital.

Señor Fujimori is under growing pressure to find a solution to the hostage crisis. He has so far resisted the possibility of a commando raid to free the hostages because Japan vociferously opposes a military plan. Among the hostages are Morihisa Aoki, the Japanese Ambassador, and at least 20 Japanese executives.

On Thursday, Nestor Cerpa Cartolini, the rebels' leader, kept up the war of nerves with Señor Fujimori by saying that he would not take part in talks until the Government allows imprisoned rebels to begin receiving visits again. Visits to high-security prisons had been stopped since December 17 when the Tupac Amaru took their hostages. The Red Cross has also been barred from the prisons. It remained unclear whether the demand by Señor Cerpa had been met.

Last night there were indications that Canada was willing to act as go-between, with Ottawa prepared to guarantee the safe transit of the rebels out of the country.

Doubts grow over Cosby murder witness

FROM GILES WHITTELL
IN LOS ANGELES

POLICE faced a setback in their investigation into the murder of Bill Cosby's son yesterday as doubts arose over the credibility of their only witness.

A white woman in a mini-skirt and short fur coat who said she saw Ennis Cosby, 27, shot dead appeared to change her story during day-long questioning by detectives.

The only son of the much loved comedian had pulled off a freeway in a prosperous and relatively safe West Los Angeles neighbourhood to change a flat tyre on his Mercedes sports car when he

was shot once in the head early on Thursday.

Protest calls to CNN television after it broadcast pictures of his body beside the car in a pool of blood prompted an on-air apology. But television crews continued to besiege the Cosby family homes in New York and Los Angeles.

Police said that robbery was the most likely motive for the killing, even though nothing appeared to have been taken from the \$130,000 (£77,000) car.

The mystery deepened with reports that when his tyre burst at 1.30am, Cosby was on his way to visit the woman who later claimed to have witnessed his murder.

He contacted her by cellphone and

asked her to drive out and help by shining her headlights while he changed the tyre, CBS reported. The station said that the woman, 40, changed her account during interviews with detectives, saying she drove away on seeing a white man approach Mr Cosby and returned to find him dead. She is said to work in the entertainment business and to have met Mr Cosby only days earlier.

The young man had a reputation for being unaffected by his father's huge wealth and fame. He was 6ft 3in and was studying for a master's degree in remedial education. The most eloquent tribute to him came from his father: "He was my hero".



Bill Cosby and his wife Camille with their son, Ennis, right, in New York yesterday

Norwegian nears pole

THE Norwegian explorer, Boerge Ousland, was last night just a few miles short of completing his epic journey across the Antarctic - alone, unaided and on foot (Roger Maynard writes).

Although he experienced whiteout conditions yesterday morning, 25 miles southwest of his target - New Zealand's Scott Base - he resumed his 1,673-mile journey in the afternoon. Staff at Scott Base forecast that he would reach there later today.

Some of the 45 people at the base were set to escort him on the home stretch. A message

had been relayed to us that the first thing he wants is a cup of tea," said Julian Tangane, New Zealand's Scott Base leader, who has been tracking Mr Ousland's progress.

This is Mr Ousland's second attempt to cross Antarctica on foot. His last attempt failed when he suffered from frostbite. This time his main rival, the British explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes, gave up on December 12 after suffering from kidney stones.

Mr Ousland, 34, who set out more than two months ago, is towing a sledge with about 400lb of supplies.

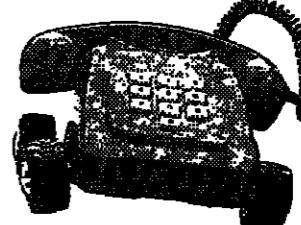
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Italian aristocrat of the art world battered to death

By RICHARD OWEN

POLICE in Florence said yesterday they were baffled by the murder of an aristocratic art and antiques expert who was found battered to death in his elegant 14th-century palazzo.

Count Alivio di Robilant, 72, worked for Sotheby's for many years and was widely admired in the international art world for his courtesy. He was found on Thursday by his cleaning lady in his flat on the third floor of the Palazzo Rucellai in Via della Vigna Nuova, one of Florence's most fashionable addresses.

Police said he was lying on the floor in his dressing gown near the piano in his drawing room, his skull apparently smashed "by a heavy object such as a marble ashtray or table lamp". Neighbours said they had earlier heard him playing Bach fugues on the piano. He had been struck at least four times.

Count di Robilant, who lived alone, was divorced from his American wife, Elizabeth (nee Stokes), whom he married in 1956. With his tall good looks and air of distinction, he attracted numerous female admirers.

He enjoyed a debonair lifestyle in Florence and Venice, where his family originated. The family once owned the palazzo on the Grand Canal in which Byron lodged, and he was a leading light in the international "Save Venice" campaign, conducting a pass-

ionate drive for the restoration of the Venice Arsenal.

The Count spoke fluent English and moved with ease in the world of fine arts, continuing to advise and act for Sotheby's in Italy after his retirement. His son, Andrea di Robilant, is the Washington correspondent of *La Stampa*, and another, Filippo, is the spokesman in Brussels for Emma Bonino, the European Commissioner. Count di Robilant's brother, Carlo, who lives in London, was expected to arrive in Italy yesterday.

Julian Stock, the head of Sotheby's Rome office, said Count di Robilant had headed the Florence office of Sotheby's until his retirement in 1989. "I am devastated," he said.

Father's faith 'unshaken'

REGINALD GREEN, the father of an American boy shot dead by the Mafia, said yesterday his faith in Italian justice had not been dented by the acquittal of the alleged killers (Richard Owen writes).

Nicholas Green, 7, died when armed men tried to hold up the family's hired car in Calabria. Two mafiosi were acquitted on Thursday. Nicholas's organs were donated for transplants in Italy.

Figure for Nazi loot in error

By PETER CAPELLA IN GENEVA

ILLICIT Nazi gold dealings with Switzerland were probably worth about \$16 million (about £10 million) at the time, far less than was previously reported, the Foreign Office in London said yesterday.

In a revised version of a report on a 1946 reparations agreement concluded by Switzerland and the Allies, the Foreign Office in effect admitted that its researchers had made a mistake on a key

figure last September, writing \$500 million instead of \$500 million. British archives indicate that the amount was quoted by a Swiss National Bank official during negotiations with the Allies.

The Swiss Government welcomed the correction, while regretting that "on the basis of incorrect information Switzerland has been condemned hastily and out of hand, damaging the country's image".

Letters, page 23

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Schroders

Sofia's old dictator dreams of making a comeback

By RICHARD OWEN

ON THE snow-covered mountain high above the shabby streets of Sofia, an old man of 85 is watching the tragedy of Bulgaria's descent into economic collapse and political turmoil with grim satisfaction: Todor Zhivkov, the wily former Communist dictator who was overthrown in the East European upheavals of 1989.

Although Count di Robilant's body showed no sign that he had fought his assailant, the apartment walls were covered in blood. The rooms had been ransacked, but police said none of his many valuable Old Master drawings, paintings and other art objects appeared to have been stolen. The computer in his study was still switched on, but the screen had been smashed, giving rise to speculation that information stored on discs or the computer's memory might provide a clue to the motive for the attack.

The front door of the apartment was unlocked, and the windows on to the terrace were open. But neighbours said this was often the case and the Count was "careless about security". His family had links with the Braganzas — the Portuguese Royal Family — and the Mocenigo family, which provided a number of Doges of Venice.

The palazzo in which he died is owned by another branch of his family, the Rucellais. Neighbours said there had been rows between the family and tenants of the building who allegedly had underworld connections.

SwFr250 million in 1946 in compensation for bullion that they had bought from Germany during the Second World War.

The Swiss Government welcomed the correction, while regretting that "on the basis of incorrect information Switzerland has been condemned hastily and out of hand, damaging the country's image".

Letters, page 23

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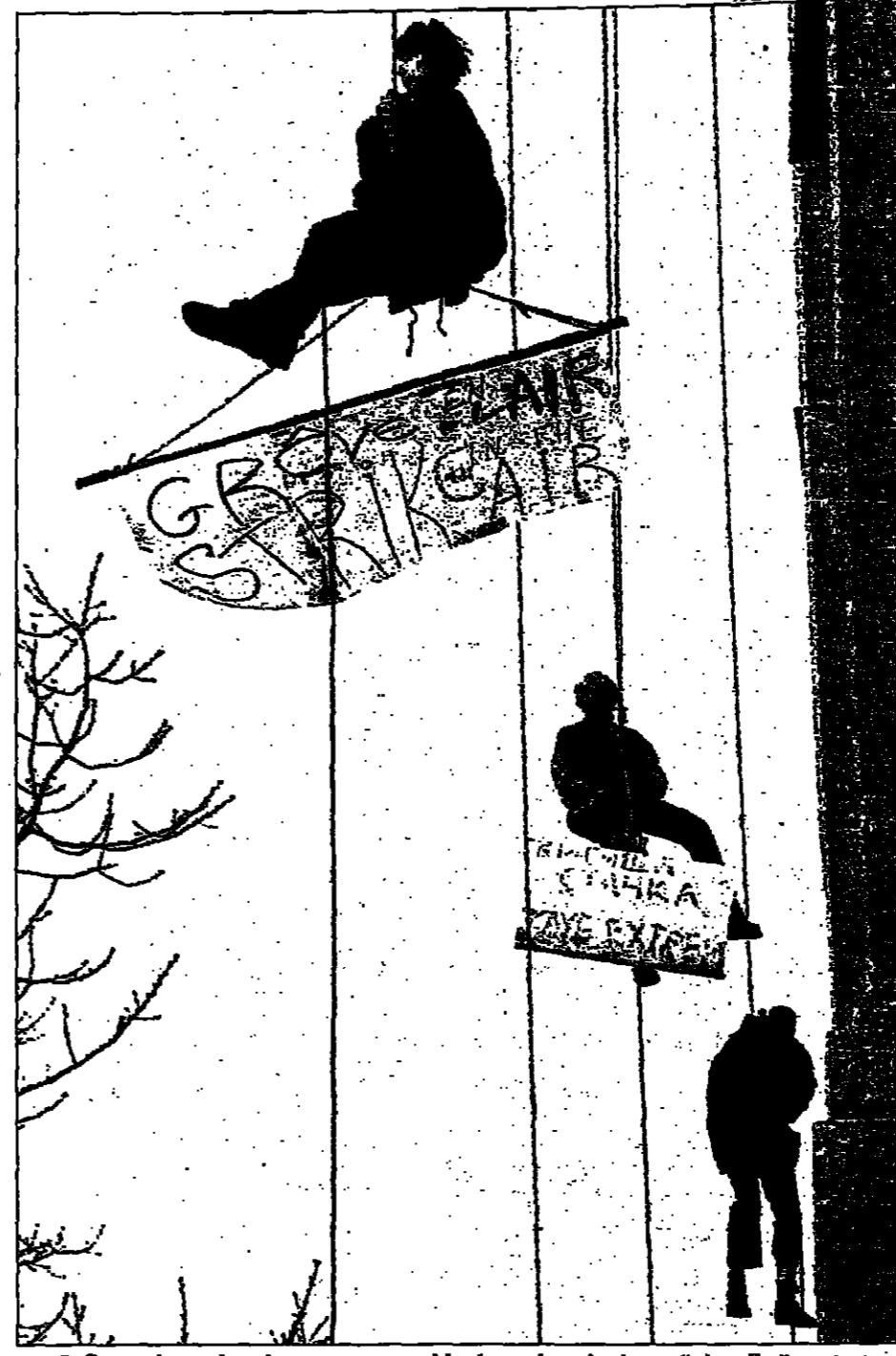
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Sofia students dangle on ropes outside the university in an "airstrike" protest

per cent of exports were electronics and machine tools, "not potatoes".

The former Communists, renamed the Socialist Party of Bulgaria (BSP), were returned to power two years ago. But Mr Zhivkov insists they lack his "snack of firm government" and muses that the country may yet turn back to the old days.

This is not how many Bulgarians remember the old days, however. Opposition politicians such as Ivan Kostov, leader of the Union of Democratic Forces, recall that Mr Zhivkov was so servile to the old-style Soviet Union that at one stage he suggested to Moscow — according to recently opened party archives

— that Bulgaria should become a Soviet republic.

Opposition leaders also recall that when Mr Zhivkov was ousted in 1989 he was charged with embezzlement of state funds and investigated for support for international terrorism and suppression of the rights of Bulgaria's one million ethnic Turks.

As the wave of protests continues, more doctors are joining the strikes, saying hospitals can no longer afford to heat wards or feed patients, let alone treat them. One surgeon at a children's cancer ward said it was "at the end of its resources", and he would soon have to decide which of his young patients would live and which would die.



Zhivkov: "the people still love me".

Moscow hits back in war of the traffic offenders

FROM ROBIN LODGE
IN MOSCOW

THE Cold War may over but the Russians still know how to retaliate.

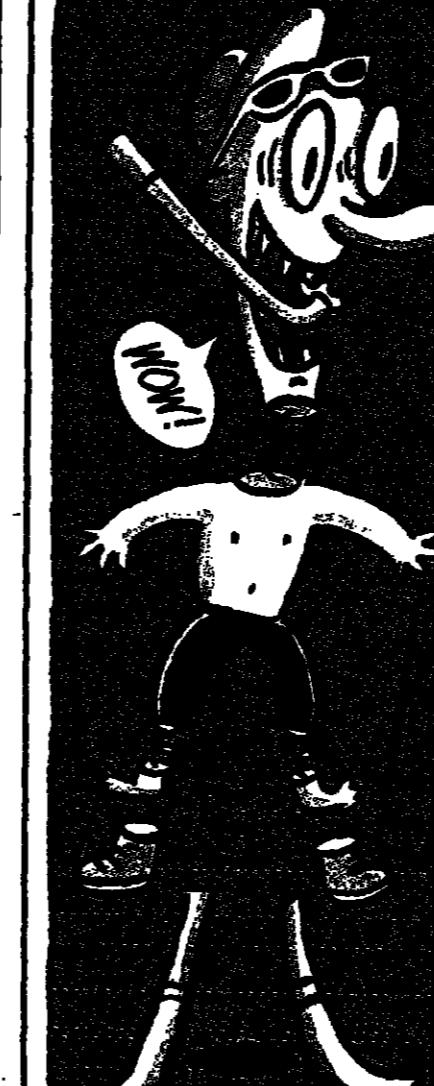
Two weeks after two diplomats from Russia and Belarus complained of being roughed up by New York police during a dispute over a parking ticket, the Moscow traffic police launched an exercise in reciprocity straight from the Soviet textbook.

The New York incident, in which the Russian diplomat said his arm had been broken, came after a spate of complaints by the city authorities that diplomats from the former Soviet Union were abusing their immunity with repeated traffic offences. The diplomats said they were being unfairly targeted by the US authorities.

The state-run newspaper *Rossiiskie Vesti* said yesterday that parking fines in New York had caused "political confrontation", with a battle between the Russians' United Nations mission and the city authorities. More than 14,000 tickets had been issued to Russian diplomatic cars last year, it said, while Sergei Lavrov, the Russian Ambassador to the UN, had been given three tickets in one day.

This week rank-and-file traffic police in Moscow disclosed that they were preparing a crackdown on foreign drivers in retaliation. Last night the police confirmed that they had carried out a two-day operation against cars registered to foreigners, easily identifiable by their red or yellow number plates, although a spokesman denied any connection with the incidents in the United States.

"There has been a sharp rise in the number of accidents involving foreigners, so we thought it was time for a blitz," Viktor Prizyakov, of the Moscow State Motor Inspectorate, said. "It was the first of its kind, but I can tell you it will not be the last." According to the police, more than 200 offences were recorded, 26 cars were ordered off the road and 52 drivers fined. American drivers were found to be the worst offenders.



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Queen Bee of press sets Washington buzzing

FROM QUENTIN LETTS IN NEW YORK

THE lofty American newspaper publisher, Katharine Graham, has astonished her family, friends and colleagues by writing a highly personal autobiography which includes details of her husband's philandering and his suicide.

Mrs Graham, owner of *The Washington Post* and regarded as a powerful woman of discreet taste has unburdened her soul to a remarkable degree. In her book she not only chronicles her newspaper's distinguished coverage of the Watergate scandal and her business life, but also examines her failings as a wife and details the affair that her late husband, Phil, had with a young Australian reporter.

Before the book was sent to her publisher, Mrs Graham's daughter, Lally, asked her: "Are you sure you want to put this in?" Her decision to proceed was all the more remarkable given the question of American broadcasters, such as the *Post*, when it comes to examining the private lives of public figures.

Mrs Graham discloses that

her husband, nicknamed her "Porky", and describes the mood swings of his manic depression which would lead eventually to his suicide.

R. W. Apple Jr. of *The New York Times*, a veteran newspaperman and a friend of Mrs Graham, said yesterday that the American capital was surprised by the personal nature of the memoirs. "A lot of this stuff has been whispered about before but I didn't ever expect to see it in a book by her," he said. "Kay has written the book she always said she couldn't write."

In addition to the details about her marriage — which

include the almost-deranged letter that her husband wrote to her when it seemed their marriage must end — Mrs Graham describes her shortcomings as a mother. She also recalls her subservience to the overpowering Mr Graham, how she "seemed to enjoy the role of doormat wife" and how even after his death she was a tremulous rabbit, liable to weep at bad news.

The picture she draws of herself is very different to the collected newspaper proprietor who has known most of the key figures in American politics in the past 30 years and whose insistence on pro-

ceeding with the Watergate story helped to bring down the Nixon Administration.

Mrs Graham, 79, also reflects on her close relationships with many of the politicians, such as Henry Kissinger and, early on in his presidency, Richard Nixon. Although she has long been regarded as an integral part of the classy Washington Establishment, she is viewed by friends as the Queen Bee of the "liberal media conspiracy" against the Right.

The Katharine Graham of "Beltway" society, supremely connected, and supervising a handsome salon from her large, park-lined house in Georgetown, will never be seen in the same way. *Personal History* may be one of the most surprising and candid self-portraits by a press baron.

Unlike some public figures, Mrs Graham wrote the book by herself. "Considering that she is not a professional writer, it is written pretty well," Mr Apple said. "In fact, she writes rather better than some of my reporters!"

IN HER book, Katharine Graham lays bare the events surrounding her husband's suicide.

She recalls how she and her husband retired to bed after lunch at their country farmhouse. After a short while he left the room and moments later there was the

sound of a gun being fired. "I bolted out of the room and ran around in a frenzy looking for him," she writes. "When I opened the door to a downstairs bathroom, I found him ... The wounds were so ghastly that I just ran into the next room and buried my head in my hands."



Katharine Graham tells of her late husband's philandering in *Personal History*

Reclusive Salinger to publish first book in 34 years

FROM BRONWEN MADDOCK
IN WASHINGTON

J. D. SALINGER, whose *The Catcher in the Rye* became the totem of disillusionment for a generation, next month publishes his first book for 34 years.

The reclusive author, 78, who has devoted his energies for three decades to shielding himself from public attention, has banned any publicity about the book: even details of the number of copies printed. News of the forthcoming publication leaked out despite his wishes through a bookstore's Internet pages.

However, to the disappointment of fans who had hoped for a further instalment of the Glass family, characters central to much of Mr Salinger's fiction, the book, entitled *Hapworth 16, 1924*, is believed to be essentially a reprint of an 80-page story which took up almost the whole of the June 19, 1965, edition of *The New Yorker* magazine.

The narrator of the story is Seymour Glass, who features in many Salinger stories. The book takes the form of a letter to his family, home from the seven-year-old Seymour while at summer camp. When first published, the story attracted savage reviews. The *Los Angeles Times* commented in 1968 that it "was widely regarded as narcissistic, prolix and ultimately obscure in its intent". It has, however, remained a collector's item.

Authors John Updike and Mary McCarthy also argued that Mr Salinger's obsession with the Glass family, the subject of his novel *Franny and Zooey*, was damaging his fiction. Nonetheless, the pub-

lisher, Alfred A. Knopf, has agreed to throw away fan mail.

Salinger, 78, has been an elusive figure, spending most of his time in the basement of his house in New York, the "literary scope of the decade". Between 1951 and 1963 Mr Salinger published four books: *Catcher in the Rye*, *Franny and Zooey* and *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters*.

He has never allowed his personal papers to be examined by collectors or historians. Since the 1968 appearance of *Hapworth*, he has published nothing. He is widely regarded as one of the most influential and greatest American authors.

However, since *Catcher* in 1951, he has retreated into as much isolation as he can command. He married in 1955 but divorced in 1967, and lives in seclusion in New Hampshire. He has ordered his agents to throw away fan mail unopened.

A few years ago, he instructed them to track down the author of a World Wide Web page devoted to his books: the page has been withdrawn.



Archbishop Tutu reading a card from a well-wisher

Tutu has operation for prostate cancer

FROM RAY KENNEDY IN JOHANNESBURG

ARCHBISHOP Desmond Tutu, the former head of the Anglican Church in South Africa and 1984 winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, has been diagnosed as suffering from prostate cancer.

John Allen, his secretary, said in Cape Town yesterday that the archbishop, 65, had undergone surgery on Wednesday when most of the prostate was removed. More tests would be carried out to ascertain if the disease had spread.

Archbishop Tutu sounded as cheerful as ever when he was telephoned at a private clinic on Thursday. He said: "The doctor is very pleased with my progress and I am

sitting in bed watching the cricket, the Third Test between South Africa and India. I expect to be in hospital until the weekend and off work for about three weeks. I would like to thank people for their wishes and prayers."

He retired last June as Archbishop of Cape Town and head of the Anglican Church in South Africa, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Lesotho and St Helena, but postponed plans to take up a study fellowship in Atlanta, Georgia, in order to chair the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which is hearing testimony about human rights abuses during the apartheid era.

France angers Iraq with Uday ban

FROM MICHAEL THEODOULOU
IN NICOSIA

IRAQ has rebuked France for refusing to allow President Saddam Hussein's eldest son, Uday, enter the country for hospital treatment following an assassination attempt last month. It said that French businessmen could lose lucrative contracts as a result.

"We consider that the French Government has committed a monumental error," thundered the government daily, *al-Thawra*, in a front-page editorial. "This inhuman attitude will harm France."

The tirade was seen as further evidence that the condition of Uday, 33, is far more serious than first admitted. It came just days after Tariq Aziz, Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister, praised France for leaving Britain and the United States to police the six-year-old exclusion zone over northern Iraq.

France was Iraq's main Western arms supplier before the Gulf War and Baghdad still owes France about £3 billion.

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Does Crosland's socialism have a future for Blair?

Anthony Howard on a philosopher king who anticipated new Labour

Most political leaders have an ideological pedigree. One of the troubling things about Tony Blair is that he appears to have none. Asked whence he derives his inspiration, he may murmur something about Henry Campbell-Bannerman — adding (not wholly selflessly) that the victim of the great Liberal landslide of 1906 turned out to be far more radical a Prime Minister than anyone expected from his period as Leader of the Opposition.

Yet in choosing among Labour's own household gods — Attlee, Bevan, Gaitskell, Wilson — he has, for understandable reasons, proved reticent to a fault. There exists, however, one different role model to whom Mr Blair might have been expected to attach his colours, although revealingly he has never done so. He is that great "revisionist" figure of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, the Oxford don turned practising politician Anthony Crosland.

Two just-published academic studies on the legacy of the only philosopher-king produced by the British Left in the second half of the 20th century deserve to be required reading, at least in the present Labour leader's office. If nothing else they demonstrate just how hard is the way of the transgressor against party orthodoxy in modern British politics. (Crosland tried twice, in 1972 and 1976, to become first deputy leader and then leader of his party, but was rewarded with a derisory vote on each occasion.)

He was, though, a wonderfully glamorous personality who ended up, for all too brief a ten-month period (he died aged 58 in February 1977), as James Callaghan's Foreign Secretary in the last Labour Government to hold office in Britain. But this was never his real claim to fame. That rests instead on the book he produced 40 years ago called *The Future of Socialism* and, to a lesser degree, on two volumes of essays he subsequently published, *The Conservative Enemy* (1962) and *Socialism Now* (1976).

If any individual tried to provide a largely bemused Labour movement with a route map for its progress through a world a great deal more complex than that ever envisaged by Karl Marx (or, for that matter, by R.H. Tawney), then Crosland's claim to have performed that service remains indisputable.

Why, therefore, should Mr Blair be so reluctant to identify with him? In diagnosis there was certainly very little to choose between them. Virtually everything that Mr Blair has said since becoming Labour's leader in July 1994 about the need for the party to alter its base and change its appeal finds its echo in the various things that Crosland wrote during Labour's last period in the wilderness, between 1951 and 1964.

In particular, his famous Fabian tract *Can Labour Win?* uncannily predates the entire thrust of the Blairite approach towards modernising the party. The attack on the cloth-cap image, the questioning of the undue reliance on the trade unions, the apprehension that Labour suffered from being perceived as the party of austerity rather than of prosperity — it is all there.

The difficulty and embarrassment arise when it comes to remedies. However much of a "revisionist" he may have been perceived in his own age and time, Crosland remained an unrepentant socialist (who, like Mr Blair, would never have been tempted to join the SDP). As late as 1974, he committed himself to the view that "equality and higher public expenditure" are what divides us from the Tories — scarcely a message calculated to be palatable in today's Cromwellian Labour world, either to Mr Blair or to his Shadow Chancellor, Gordon Brown.

There was, inconveniently, a radical passion about Crosland's beliefs — he was, for example, an inveterate opponent of public schools — that would probably

relegate him in the contemporary Labour Party to the position of a Ken Livingstone or even a Tony Benn.

Rhetoric, though, is one thing: reality is quite another — and that was the story of Crosland's ministerial life. The Cabinet post he held for longest — 22 years — was that of Minister of Education in Harold Wilson's first and second Governments. Here, it has to be said, his record was sadly disillusioning to all those who had taken an active role with him, which would be the true successor to the Wagnerian without due respect from total harmony.

The quiet originality of *Palestrina* has nothing of the shock value

Roger Scruton looks forward to *Palestrina*, the greatest opera never before staged in Britain

He this month receives its British premiere at Covent Garden, 80 years after its first performance under the great Bruno Walter in Munich. The opera's neglect in this country is due to many factors, not the least being the enormous cast required for its second act, in which the composer attempts the astonishing feat of staging the Council of Trent as music drama. Far more decisive, however, has been Pfitzner's resolute stance against Modernism, and his brave attempt to forge a style which would be the true successor to the Wagnerian without due respect from total harmony.

The quiet originality of *Palestrina* has nothing of the shock value which would recommend it to forward-looking directors, and it says much for the temper of our opera houses that this great opera is being produced in the wake of Bernd Alois Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten* — an exorbitant work which merely pretends to be original, while in fact being no more than a ragbag of Modernist clichés.

Palestrina concerns an imagined spiritual crisis in the life of the 16th-century composer Pierluigi da Palestrina, when, during the Council of Trent, he is called upon to produce a Mass that would purify and renew the liturgical tradition of the Catholic Church. Into this simple

A musical offering to transcend our time

story Pfitzner reads another: his own predicament as a tonal composer, heir to the great tradition of German Romantic music in an age of musical iconoclasm. And also another: the condition of modern Europe, having thrown away its religion, and facing the void. One man's effort to transcend his sterility and loneliness becomes, in Pfitzner's work, the effort of all of us to rededicate our earthly existence, and to face our inner life with confidence, despite the chaos and turmoil of the world outside.

From the very opening measures you hear the spiritual elevation of Pfitzner's music. Tonality it certainly is, in D minor with resonances of the old church modes. There are standard cadences and solid triads. Yet the harmonies are diverted from their natural tendency, and create an airy, spectral impression. For most of the magnificent first act we are presented with an ever-moving image of concord behind a veil of mild dissonance. Altered notes dislodge the structures above them,

so that they fall upon their neighbours. But everything happens naturally, peacefully, and with the clarity of a true polyphonist. The effect is like an echo in the vault of some great cathedral, and the drama creates a similar impression — as though relayed to us over a vast distance, its worldly accidents refined away, and only the spiritual essence remaining.

Pfitzner wrote his own libretto, and it is a minor masterpiece, containing lines of true poetry. The chastity of the music is matched by the purity of the characters, and even if you may wonder at the possibility of a drama in which the only woman — Palestrina's dead wife — is a ghost, this too has the ring of truth. The music gives reality and substance to this lonely, decent man, as he comes to terms with his three calamities: the death of a beloved wife, the self-destruction of Christian Europe, and the rise of a musical idiom which spurns

the old masters of harmony.

There is in Pfitzner's hero an indissoluble unity between private affections and artistic ideals. *Palestrina* is an ordinary Roman bourgeois for whom marriage and home are necessities, and whose artistic life thrives upon domestic peace. His peace is calamitously lost, and with it his creative urge. But he rediscovers both, and finds through music a proof of the apostolic idea, when the squabbles and intrigues of the Council of Trent are threatening to destroy it. The outside world may dissolve in chaos, pure power may strut on the political stage, but the inner life remains and can be repossessed through music.

But the act of repossession is also an act of submission. The composer makes an offering of his music, on the altar built by the masters. To break with the past, to pour scorn on its inner wisdom, is to align oneself with the void. It is to lose the hope of inner peace, in a world where no other peace remains to us.

But the art of our civilisation endures, a permanent proof that human life has a meaning and that in living for the moment we invite our own destruction. Like Goethe's Faust, we must learn to possess our inheritance and to make it our own. For it is the source of our values, and the only thing that lasts.

The Green Man's grimace

Ubiquitous mystery of medieval art, this demon is beyond good and evil

The head is of a handsome man of mature years. His brow is furrowed and his eyes have a slight squint. His mouth is open. From it, indeed from the depths of his throat, emerge two giant hawthorn leaves. These sprout more leaves curling up round his cheeks and down under his chin. They become his whiskers and beard. They garland his head, then leap off into space. Nuts grow among them and thrushes collect to eat the nuts. Man becomes nature. From a human mouth spew all the lush riches of the world.

The face is carved in stone, high

on a corbel in Sutton Benger church in Wiltshire. It is of a Green Man, for a thousand years the most common and mysterious symbol in English art. The Green Man inspired medieval sculpture, painting, drama and dance. He gave his name to a thousand inns, living on in their pub signs. He is Jack-in-the-Green, Man-in-the-Oak, the woodman, wodwose, ivyman, woodhouse, perhaps the May King, perhaps even Bottom.

The Green Man is the wild man of pageant and heraldry. He abducts women into the forest and devours unbaptised children. Though he features nowhere in Christian symbolism, Green Men peer down from the roofs and out of the walls of half the medieval churches in England. Some Green Men have greenery sprouting from their nostrils, others from their ears, others from the hair. Some squat, some grin, some sneer. All are in the bizarre act of exuding nature from the orifices of their heads.

I am intrigued by vast knowledge of minutiae. Somewhere on Nambia's Skeleton Coast is a man who leads safaris on his hands and knees with a magnifying glass. His prey are the insects coming up briefly for moisture at dawn. Those who return from such expeditions are mesmerised by the man's talent for bringing the minute to life. (Afterwards they find dogs looking at them as if they were weird.)

Kathleen Basford is safari queen of the Green Men. This week she publishes a compendium of these creatures in all their glory. Her scholarship is microscopic rather than monumental. There is not much to say about Green Men and what she has to say she confines to just 20 pages of text and notes. The rest of her book is photographs taken by herself. They are astonish-

ing. She has travelled Europe in search of Green Men, her husband stooping beneath the weight of her cameras.

She has found Roman Green Men (in the guise of Bacchus) and Saxon Green Men. She has found Normans and Goths. Their foliate sprout more leaves curling up round his cheeks and down under his chin. They become his whiskers and beard. They garland his head, then leap off into space. Nuts grow among them and thrushes collect to eat the nuts. Man becomes nature. From a human mouth spew all the lush riches of the world.

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Green Man with hawthorn and birds, early 14th century, at All Saints Church, Sutton Benger, Wiltshire

dom. Whether evil or good, natural or spiritual, he has locked his secret away in stone. Perhaps he is just watching, as the past always watches, foretelling mortality. As the medieval verse goes: "So here a thought your teeth to clinch/ All greenness comes to withering." Yet he leads us, as Basford found, to some of the most beautiful places on earth, the churches and cathedrals of the Middle Ages. It is a strange demon that can lead us to such heavenly vistas.

The Green Man will have the last laugh. The natural landscape of the British Isles is not field or scrub or moorland. It is forest. Come Armageddon, leave agriculture to rot, and forest would again cover most of Britain. Trees will seize suburban gardens, motorway interchanges, hypermarkets and office blocks, as they seized whole monasteries after the Dissolution. Trees will invade the valleys and climb up the hillsides. In those trees we shall again see the dark men, their mouths stuffed with leaves.

The Green Man is published by Boydell & Brewer at £35.

Left out

LOST in the confusion of Nicola Horlick's career at Morgan Grenfell Asset Management may also be her longed-for political career. Mrs Horlick was set on career as a Labour politician.

Last year she attended a private City lunch with Peter Mandelson, the Labour MP and campaign director. Her office and immediate staff, among them Carl Sternberg, a fund manager in his late twenties, have been an important stop-off point for Labour's salaries into the City.

Like Matthew Harding, the late Chelsea FC director and insurance whiz, who had hopes of being a Labour Cabinet minister, Mrs Horlick often spoke of how she fancied a role on a Labour government front bench. Her extraordinary business success, coupled with her homeliness — she was known around the office as Brenda,

particularly after it was discovered she was a keen knitter — would have doubtless propelled her upwards in the Harriet Harman mould.

Now, however, she has fled to Frankfurt to lobby her German bosses. This comes after frantic nights and days on the telephone as she marshals her supporters, and an embarrassing tussle with Morgan Grenfell's personnel director in the lobby of her old offices.

All of which is bad news. Like our German bankers, there is little new Labour hates more than a panicker.

Dole cheque

FORMER Senator Bob Dole, the losing candidate in last year's American presidential election, is to appear in a television advertise-

ment for a credit card company. Mr Dole, who is fast becoming the most popular loser in American politics, was paid an estimated \$500,000 for the commercial for Visa International. He intends to give a "sizeable portion" to charity. The minute-long advertisement, which will be broadcast in the United States next weekend on the night of American football's Superbowl, shows Mr Dole visiting his home town of Russell, Kansas, and, although being welcomed by the locals, finding it impossible to buy provisions with a cheque. "It

looks like a lot of fun, it showcases my home town and it's a nice break from working on my inaugural address" — a wry recognition of the fact that had the election gone the other way, he would on Monday have been sworn in as President.

For my drawer of confusing hotel instructions come these two clauses found at the Victory Hotel in Guangdong, China:

"5. Strictly forbid to go whoring, drug taking, gamble and engage in speculation. Strictly forbid to spit anywhere, strictly forbid scribble."

"7. Don't permit fighting, excessive drinking in hotel. The Protection Dept. of this hotel will handle the trouble maker, order of the hotel influence."

Flat footed

MICHAEL Flatley, the pelican dancer who once starred in

Riverdance, has dismissed his management company, John Reid Enterprises. Not so long ago, Flatley parted company acrimoniously from Riverdance to set up his own company, managed by John Reid, a hugely respected figure who

has successfully managed Elton John for 20 or so years.

"We have been informed that Michael Flatley no longer wishes us to act as his manager," says a spokesman for Reid. "We regret we

have no alternative but to recognise that the relationship cannot continue in those circumstances."

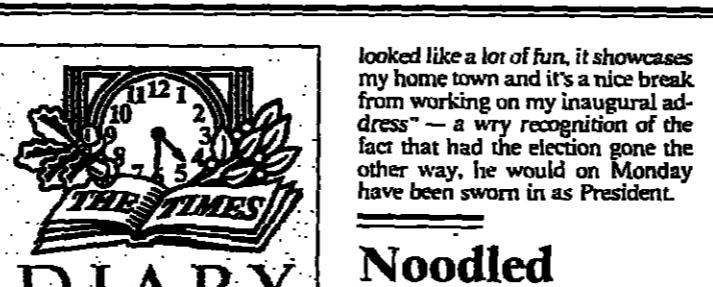
All these manoeuvrings will be of special interest to Princess Margaret, a keen Flatley fan, who has been to see Riverdance four times.

Gerónimo

WHILE Diana, Princess of Wales, highlights the plight of mine workers in Angola, her ex-husband has also decided to broaden his portfolio. He has become patron of the British Parachute Association.

A tentative chutie himself — he has made a couple of jumps, neither particularly distinguished — the Prince nevertheless believes in the rigorous discipline and the refreshing nature of the sport.

"A sport such as this," he says,



"in a world such as we have today, goes a long way towards preparing some of our youth for the society of tomorrow," Earl Howe sees nothing contentious in the Prince's statement.

P.H.S.



COURT CIRCULAR

SANDRINGHAM, NORFOLK
January 17: The Earl of Airlie KT (Lord Chamberlain) had an audience of The Queen and presented an Address from the House of Lords to which Her Majesty was graciously pleased to make reply.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE
January 17: The Princess Royal, Patron, the Home Farm Trust, this morning visited Old Quarters, Avening, Tetbury, and was received by Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Gloucestershire (Mr Henry St John).

Her Royal Highness later visited Stunhouse Community Centre, Luburn Wall, Stunhouse.

The Princess Royal, Patron, the Home Farm Trust, afterwards visited Frocester Manor, Frocester, Stunhouse.

Her Royal Highness, Patron, National Association of Citizens

Advice Bureaux, this afternoon visited the Cheltenham Citizens Advice Bureau, 14 Royal Crescent, Cheltenham.

The Princess Royal, accompanied by Captain Timothy Lawrence RN, this evening visited the Roses Theatre, Sun Street, Tewkesbury, to celebrate their Twenty First Birthday and was received by Colonel Richard Conwell-Rogers (Vice Lord-Lieutenant of Gloucestershire).

YORK HOUSE
ST JAMES'S PALACE

January 17: The Duchess of Kent, Colonel-in-Chief, The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire, this afternoon received Lieutenant-Colonel Graham Blom on assuming command of the 1st Battalion and Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Le Brun on relinquishing the appointment.

Royal engagement

The Princess Royal, as Patron of Scottish Rugby Union, will attend the Scotland v Wales international rugby match at Murrayfield at 2.45.

The Society of Schoolmasters

The Society of Schoolmasters is a registered charity and helps reformed teachers and their dependents in need. The Society was founded after a meeting of Headmasters on January 12, 1707. In the former Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand. To mark the bicentenary members of the Committee attended Eucharist nearby at 12.45, and afterwards had lunch at the Lyttelton Tavern. The Secretary, Doltons Farm, Woburn MK17 9HX, can send details to potential donors or recipients.

Barrow Hills School

Easter Term began on January 5 and ends on March 26. The St Joseph's Technology Centre was opened by His Eminence Cardinal Basil Hume, Archbishop of Westminster. OSB, on January 16. Open Day will be held on February 8 and the entrance examinations will be held on February 11. The Senior production of *Treasure Island* will take place on March 21.

Church news

The Rev Roger Broughton: to be Chaplain of the Duke of York's Royal Military School, Dover (Canterbury).

The Rev Michael Cain, Curate, St Francis New Mortlock: to be Vicar St Luke's, Derby (Derby).

The Rev Dr Neil Burgess, Director of Clergy Training (Southwell): to be also Associate Priest, Newark Team Ministry, same diocese.

Appointments in the Forces

Lieutenant-General Sir Robert Hayman-Joyce to be Deputy Chief of Defence Procurement (Operations) and to remain as Master General of the Ordnance from December 20, 1996.

MAJOR GENERAL

Brigadier J D Stoker to be Deputy Chief of Staff Headquarters Land Command in the rank of major-general from January 6.

Major-General D P Gitt to be Director General Development and Doctrine from January 6.

Major-General M D Jackson to be Commander ACE Rapid Reaction Corps in the rank of lieutenant-general from January 6.

Brigadier P A Chambers to be Senior Army Member, Royal College of Defence Studies, in the rank of major-general from December 20, 1996.

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OBITUARIES

CAPTAIN ALEXANDER HODGE, GC

Captain Alexander Hodge, GC, RNVR officer and former chairman of Standard Life Assurance, died in Edinburgh on January 4 aged 80. He was born on June 23, 1916.

It was while he was serving as a Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve sub-lieutenant in the aircraft carrier *Eagle* in the Indian Ocean in the spring of 1940 that Sandy Hodge won the George Cross for his brave rescue of several seriously injured seamen after a bomb had exploded below decks. At the time *Eagle* was steaming in the eastern Indian Ocean, flying asied reconnaissance patrols in the hope of catching German surface ships and submarines which had been reported in the area.

On March 14, 1940, a Swordfish pilot had returned to his parent ship and the aircraft were being unloaded of their bombs, which were struck down in the bomb room via a chute. At this point the bombs should all have been rendered harmless. But the somewhat complicated strike mechanism of that type of weapon made it often difficult to determine whether this had been done, and one of the 250 bombs remained armed, unknown to the handling party. Halfway down the chute the bomb slipped from the grasp of its handlers and fell down into the bomb room, where it exploded.

A dozen of the handling party were killed instantly and many more were grievously injured. The bulkhead between the bomb room and the adjacent boiler room was punctured in many places by flying fragments, but luckily *Eagle*'s robust construction prevented more serious damage. She had originally been built as a battleship for the Chilean Navy before being converted as an aircraft carrier.

Hodge, who was responsible for that part of the ship, immediately went to the bomb room, which was full of fumes and at a blistering temperature. Notwithstanding the danger of further explosions, Hodge groped his way into the compartment in pitch darkness and led several badly injured men to safety. He then returned to the bomb room where he found that one man was crushed under two heavy bombs which he could not move single-handed. Summoning help, Hodge eventually managed to move the bombs, extricate the man and have him conducted to



safety. He then returned to the bomb room again and remained there until he was satisfied that there was no one else left alive in the compartment. Having done all this, he went back to the sub-lieutenants' mess where, totally exhausted, he promptly fell asleep in an armchair.

He was gazetted as having won the Empire Gallantry Medal, but this was

immediately translated into the newly-instituted George Cross, and it was the insignia of the GC with which he was presented.

Alexander Mitchell Hodge was born at Blairgowrie, Perthshire, and educated at Fettes College and Edinburgh University, where he took an MA in 1936 and an LLB in 1938. Having qualified as a solicitor, he had been

intending to practise, but Britain's betrayal of the Czechs at Munich disturbed him deeply and, feeling that war was inevitable, he joined the RNVR in Edinburgh.

After leaving *HMS Eagle*, which went into dry dock in Singapore after her mishap, Hodge served during the central years of the war on escort duty in the corvette *Saxifrage*, serving in the Atlantic and on Murmansk convoys. He was to witness some of the most desperate actions of the climactic months of the Battle of the Atlantic, a period during which the Admiralty's position seemed hopeless at first until hope at last dawned in the spring of 1943, and it was suddenly perceived that Doenitz's U-boats had received a fatal check.

Towards the end of the war Hodge was in the Far East, serving as Staff Officer (Intelligence) to the British Pacific Fleet in the battleship *King George V*. As such, he was one of the first British officers into Tokyo after the Japanese surrender and was charged by his admiral with delivering a case of whisky to the Swiss soldiers who had safeguarded the British Embassy for the duration of hostilities.

After the war he joined the Edinburgh firm of solicitors Cowan & Stewart, where he became senior partner in 1950 and where he worked until his eventual retirement in 1984. He was a prominent figure in the commercial affairs of Edinburgh. He was a director of Standard Life Assurance, 1955-87, and was chairman of the company from 1977 to 1982. He was a former president of the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce and was, from 1967 to 1985, chairman of the General Commissioners of Income Tax for Edinburgh South.

At the same time he pursued his RNVR career, being promoted commander in 1949 and captain in 1953. He was CO of the Forth Division RNVR from 1953 to 1957, when he retired.

Hodge enjoyed his position as a governor of his old school, Fettes College, as well as his membership of the Court of Heriot-Watt University. He also served as a Deputy Lieutenant for Edinburgh. After retirement he continued to be active in para-naval affairs locally and was chairman of the Edinburgh District Sea Cadets Committee, 1959-63.

He is survived by his wife Pauline and by a son and two daughters.

REGINALD MITCHELL

Reginald Mitchell, MBE, owner of Reggie's British Pub in Atlanta, died in Falls Church, Virginia, on December 27 aged 71. He was born in Brighton on October 22, 1925.

AT FIRST glance, Reginald Mitchell seemed a stereotypical expatriate Brian, a distinguished figure twirling his handlebar moustache, immaculately suited and glad-handing visitors to Reggie's British Pub, nestled among the shops of the CNN Centre in Atlanta. For Americans seeking an authentic pub, Reggie's was certainly the real thing, with its British beer and magnificent sausages and steak and kidney pies. Mitchell was always in front of the bar, never pulling pints but



in front of the helm. He was perhaps the best-known Briton in the southern United States. He devoted himself to nurturing transatlantic goodwill and his MBE last January was in recognition of his many accomplishments in strengthening ties between British and American communities.

He organised Atlanta's first service for Remembrance Sunday in memory of those from both countries who served in two world wars. He started the Oglethorpe Ball, named after the original British Governor of Georgia, and turned it into a charity-fundraising highlight of the social calendar.

As president of the Atlanta English Speaking Union he sponsored college scholarships and Shakespearean competitions. He was involved in Burns Night, the local Scottish Highland Games and the British-American Business Group.

Reginald Mitchell was a great-great-great-grandson of Lord Cornwallis, whose defeat as commander of British troops gave the Americans their final victory in the War of

Independence. In jaunty recognition of his unfortunate forebear, Mitchell organised a Grand Losers' Day in his pub every Fourth of July with toasts to Cornwallis and his adversary, George Washington.

Reggie's was a cool refuge for many Britons seeking escape from Atlanta's blistering heat, including visitors to last year's Olympics and, some years before that, a horde of grateful British journalists covering the Democratic Convention in a dreary auditorium across the street.

Born in Brighton, Mitchell was evacuated to America early in the Second World War but returned to England in 1943, aged 17, to enlist in the Royal Marines. He later transferred to the Indian Army and was commissioned in the Punjab Frontier Force Rifles, known as 'Piffers'. In all his subsequent wanderings, he never lost his Indian Army swagger, nor his English accent.

After demob he enrolled in

the University of Georgia, took up residence in a red caboose parked near by and earned a BA in journalism. He worked his way around the United States as a freelance writer, actor, lumberjack, ranch hand and construction worker, until finally reaching Alaska where he sold encyclopedias to Eskimos.

Always a debonair figure, he shuttled between Atlanta and London, holding jobs in advertising and publicity, until becoming director of the British Menswear Guild in 1964. During his six years at the helm, he sponsored 250 promotions all over the world for British menswear and, to the delight of members, doubled their overseas sales.

In the early 1970s, he again returned to Atlanta as director of the Fashion Institute of America. He opened Reggie's on the waterfront in Norfolk, Virginia.

Mitchell's wife Patricia died in 1989. He is survived by two sons and two daughters.

SIR ROGER FALK

Sir Roger Falk, OBE, businessman, died on January 15 aged 86. He was born on June 22, 1910.

ROGER FALK was a successful businessman with a strong sense of public duty. He enjoyed a long and active career in advertising, marketing and management consultancy. But in the course of it he found time to write a bestselling book on management to serve with distinction on such public bodies as the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, the Gaming Board, and the Board of Prison Visitors, and to champion the performing arts at Sadler's Wells. He himself liked to say that his greatest achievement was to have brought up three children as a single parent after the death of his wife in the 1950s.

Educated at Haileybury and Geneva University, Roger Falk began work in 1948 at D.J. Keymer, the advertising agency run by his father. Unhappy and frustrated there at first, he soon left for South Africa, where he worked for a year on the Rhodesia Railways in Bulawayo, before his father persuaded him to rejoin



the firm this time as manager of its office in Calcutta. He spent four challenging years working there and in Bombay, before coming back to England as a director in 1935.

Selected in 1937 as prospective Conservative candidate for Shoreditch, he was prevented by the Second World War from contesting the seat, where the Labour majority was 37,000. He did, however, serve on Shoreditch Borough Council 1937-45. In 1939 he joined the RAF, serving first in France as adjoint to two Hurricane squadrons. Finishing the war with the rank of wing commander, he was appointed OBE (frill) in 1946.

He returned after the war to D.J. Keymer, spending four years as managing director before selling the company in 1949. In November of that year he became the first and last director-general of the British Export Trade Research Organisation, where he was able to draw on his extensive knowledge of foreign markets until he was running into difficulties. Embarking on what he described as 'a bit of a surgical job', he cut the number of consultants by a third. That decisive action, and his insistence that consultancy was about selling solid business expertise, rather than jargon, wizardry and gimmicks, ensured that his firm survived while many of its rivals founded.

Falk never subscribed to the

school of management that advocates 16-hour days and no life beyond the office. His bestselling book, *The Business of Management*, first published in 1961 and frequently reprinted, insisted that 'management' roles must always be subordinated to wider, human issues' and placed great importance on the public enterprise.

His own sense of social responsibility was strong, and his outside interests were wide. Particularly after the death of his wife, he threw himself into public service

with great energy and dedication. He joined the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in 1965 and remained a member until 1980; he also served as deputy chairman of the Gaming Board, and as chairman of the Central Council for Agricultural and Horticultural Co-operation. He was knighted in 1969.

In several of his appointments he was able to combine his commitment to public service with his keen interest in the arts. As chairman of the Furniture Development Council, and as a member of the Council of Industrial Design and of the Council of the Royal Society of Arts, he was a passionate and down-to-earth champion of good, functional modern design.

Sadler's Wells was the other main artistic beneficiary of his dedication and expertise. As chairman and then vice-president of its foundation and trust, he ensured that the values of the theatre's founder, Lilian Baylis, were upheld and that Sadler's Wells continued to present high quality performances to the widest possible audience even at a time of financial crisis in the arts.

Anxious to compensate for the departure of the resident opera company to the Coliseum, he was instrumental in providing the Royal Ballet touring company with a home at Sadler's Wells for 14 years from 1976. He did much to increase the theatre's sponsorship revenue, enabling it to continue to attract the best visiting companies from Britain and abroad. As life vice-president, he lived long enough to see the theatre close for redevelopment with lottery funds.

His wife Margaret, whom he married in 1938, died in 1958. He is survived by a son and two daughters.

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NEWS

Superwoman flies into action

■ Nicola Horlick, the City "superwoman" suspended by her employer Morgan Grenfell, flew to the bank's headquarters in Frankfurt yesterday for a showdown to win back her job.

She emerged victorious, claiming that two key staff had listened to her side of the story and discussed two options with her: reinstatement or fair compensation. Page 1

War crimes trial collapses

■ Britain's first Nazi war crimes trial collapsed before it began, costing the taxpayer £4 million. An Old Bailey jury decided that Szymon Serafinowicz, 86, from Banstead in Surrey, was unfit to stand trial after hearing expert evidence that he was suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Pages 1, 3

Back to earth

The American hot air balloonist Steve Fossett may be forced to abandon his attempt to fly around the world after Libya refused him permission to overfly. Page 1

Bishops speak out

Church of England bishops promised to speak out on political issues in the election campaign and fight for "a more just world". Page 6

Witness collapses

The lover of Eve Howells, whose husband and sons are charged with her murder, collapsed in the witness box. Page 8

Pulpit pain

Male worshippers' dislike of being told what to do by a female is making life difficult for women preachers. Page 10

Forger's last laugh

Erie Hebron, the art forger, is having the last laugh. His guide to faking is to be published, a year after he was murdered. Page 11

Oranges kicked into touch

■ No more will weary rugby players gather on the pitch and suck a chunk of half-time orange before picking at their teeth to remove its last shards. In March the five-minute interval is to be doubled and players may leave the field. The dear old Jaffa was as essential to rugby as a scrum or a line-out. Page 1

Getting the bird

Westminster council started to starve Trafalgar Square's pigeons into submission. It says the birds damage buildings and spread disease. Page 14

Hebron curfew

Israeli troops left most of Hebron but a curfew was clamped on Palestinians living near the remaining Jewish settlers. Page 16

Gingrich fine

Newt Gingrich is expected to have to pay a penalty of at least \$100,000 (£60,000) for violations of ethics. Page 17

Palazzo puzzle

Police were baffled by the murder of Count Alvisi di Robilant, an art connoisseur battered to death in his Florentine palazzo. Page 18

All the news

A book by Katharine Graham, the American newspaper publisher, covers her husband's philandering and suicide. Page 19

NATURE NOTES

Hedgehog (*Europa dithera*)

If this sad creature persists in its middle-of-the-road position it can expect to be kohled in large numbers.

OPINION

The old Bill: There is still time for Mr Howard to avoid a confrontation with the Upper House. Page 23

His fellow Americans: The time is not for Bill Clinton to ask what Americans can do for him, but what he can now do for Americans. Page 23

A brother's hand: The Chief Rabbi is ready to face European Judaism's greatest challenge. Page 23

LETTERS

Heath on Europe: Police Bill: Hollywood's war with Germany. Page 23

COLUMNS

Simon Jenkins: The natural landscape of the British Isles is not field or scrub but forest. Come Armageddon, forest would again cover most of the country. Page 22

Anthony Howard: Most political leaders have an ideological pedigree, but Tony Blair seems to have none. Page 22

Markets: The FT-SE 100 index closed 10.2 points up at 4207.7. Sterling's trade-weighted index rose from 96.1 to 96.6 after a fall from \$1.6752 to \$1.6683 but a rise from DM2.6673 to DM2.6890. Page 25

OBITUARIES

Captain Alexander Hodge, GC, Standard Life Assurance: Reginald Mitchell, Atlanta pub owner; Jack Willison, barber to the Royal Family. Page 25

Economy: Weak receipts from VAT helped to push up December's government borrowing. Page 27

Storehouse: The group is to part company with its finance director. Page 27

Guinness: The drinks company spent £182 million on its own shares. Page 22

Markets: The FT-SE 100 index closed 10.2 points up at 4207.7. Sterling's trade-weighted index rose from 96.1 to 96.6 after a fall from \$1.6752 to \$1.6683 but a rise from DM2.6673 to DM2.6890. Page 25

Tennis: Tim Henman was sent packing 6-1, 7-6, 6-3 by Michael Chang in the third round of the Australian Open in Melbourne. Page 52

Rugby union: The five nations' championship opens, needing to stand comparison with southern hemisphere competition. Page 52

Football: Michael Duberry, Chelsea and England Under-21 defender, is out for the rest of the season. Page 21

Music: Tim Henman was sent packing 6-1, 7-6, 6-3 by Michael Chang in the third round of the Australian Open in Melbourne. Page 52

Kit cars: Head-on crashes: Vectra estate

Wake up, kuvvies! The Government gets a sullen acquiescence from its arts community. Richard Morrison longs for some creative spice. Page 21

Wintery night: Opera North has perversely set *Falstaff* in midwinter, and a chill spread over this sunniest of operatic comedies on its first night. Page 21

Crisp new tenor: Just five years after his professional debut the young American Richard Workman is in the top rank of Rossini tenors and is set for stardom. Page 21

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Ski whizz: Chemmy Alcott Trip to the top: Drew Barrymore Win a Las Vegas holiday

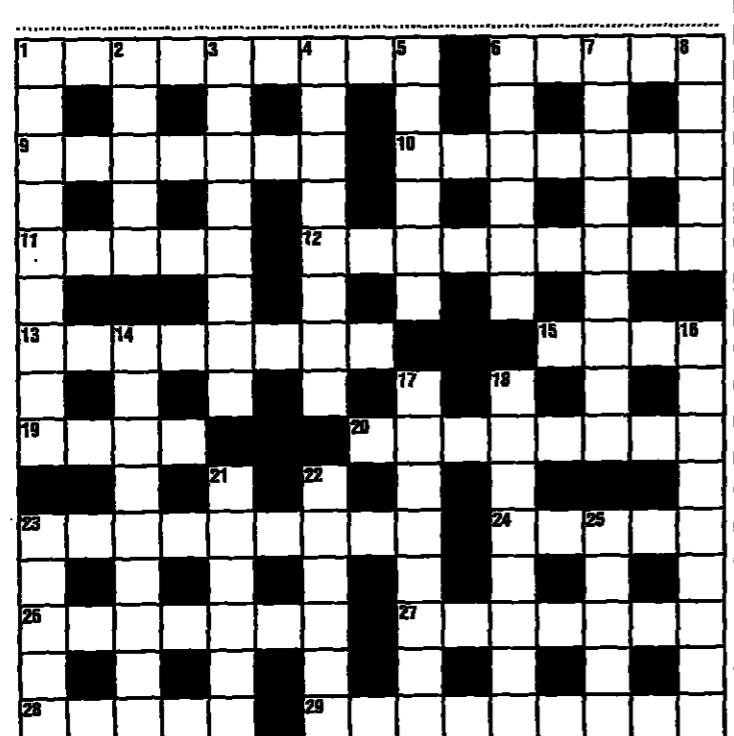
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THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,380

A £20 book token will be awarded to the senders of the first five correct solutions opened next Thursday. Entries should be addressed to: The Times, Saturday Crossword Competition, PO Box 486, Virginia Street, London E1 9DD. The names of the winners and the solution will be published next Saturday.

Name/Address



ACROSS
1 Explain vote (3,6).
6 Aide and colleague of religious leader (5).
9 Government order backing plea to arrest me (7).
10 Feeling uncertain with hand and leg, being in drink (7).
11 Abandon the fight (5).
12 Mill, for example, produces this weekly (9).
13 For example, a daughter started in profession (8).
15 Talk of path where pass should be? (4).
19 Boy in depression (4).
20 True lady involved in this? Hardly! (8).
23 Draw another of trainer's horses, not a starter for bookies (9).
24 Admitting the sea needs a clean (5).
26 Fateful order one has reason to follow (7).
27 Print style for listing characters (7).
28 Stream of consciousness? Not when one comes out of it (5).
29 Wed with battle force to presumed lair of monster (9).

Solution to Puzzle No 20,379

BANJOIST B K T
W U N U ADOPTIVE
WARM F K X L L
T P A R T E X C H A N G E
H T I O A M T
P E A H E N FIREAWAY
M E G F Z P
P A R Q U E T B E Z I Q U E
I U K T N L E
P E T E R P A N E I G H T H
E U I A R E I
W A T E R D I V I N E R M
O U G I I A J A R I
H O B O T I C S T O I
K E N H A Y F E V E R
LAST WEEK'S WINNERS: 1 Montgomery, Eliza, More, R. Northam, Weston, Bucks; 2 Desborough, Cheshire, Surrey; 3 H. Ayre, F. R. Spragg, Tiverton, Berks; 4 H. Ayre, F. R. Spragg, Tiverton, Berks; 5 H. Ayre, F. R. Spragg, Tiverton, Berks; 6 H. Ayre, F. R. Spragg, Tiverton, Berks; 7 H. Ayre, F. R. Spragg, Tiverton, Berks; 8 H. Ayre, F. R. Spragg, Tiverton, Berks; 9 H. Ayre, F. R. Spragg, Tiverton, Berks; 10 H. Ayre, F. R. Spragg, Tiverton, Berks; 11 H. Ayre, F. R. Spragg, Tiverton, Berks; 12 H. Ayre, F. R. Spragg, Tiverton, Berks; 13 H. Ayre, F. R. Spragg, Tiverton, Berks; 14 H. Ayre, F. R. Spragg, Tiverton, Berks; 15 H. Ayre, F. R. Spragg, Tiverton, Berks; 16 H. Ayre, F. R. Spragg, Tiverton, Berks; 17 H. Ayre, F. R. Spragg, Tiverton, Berks; 18 H. Ayre, F. R. Spragg, Tiverton, Berks; 19 H. Ayre, F. R. Spragg, Tiverton, Berks; 20 H. Ayre, F. R. Spragg, Tiverton, Berks; 21 H. Ayre, F. R. Spragg, Tiverton, Berks; 22 H. Ayre, F. R. Spragg, Tiverton, Berks; 23 H. Ayre, F. R. 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BUSINESS EDITOR Lindsay Cook

SATURDAY JANUARY 18 1997

LVMH sells £560m of shares in Guinness

GUINNESS, the drinks company, yesterday paid out £182 million in a share buy-back as it attempted to ease the pain caused by the decision of LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, the company's principal shareholder, to reduce its stake from 20.9 per cent to 14.2 per cent.

Guinness stepped into the market to purchase 44 million shares at 414p from Goldman Sachs after the French luxury goods and drinks company announced that it had placed 135 million shares with the merchant bank at the same price.

The move, which is standard City practice, helped to

steady Guinness's share price after shares fell 22p to 414p in early trading. By close the shares had rebounded to 432p, down just 4p on the day.

Ten years ago Guinness was accused of illegally propelling up its share price in an attempt to underpin a £2.7 billion bid for United Distillers, the spirits company. Four people, including Ernest Saunders, the former chairman, were subsequently found guilty of fraud in connection with the share support operations.

LVMH, which informed

Guinness of its decision to sell on Thursday evening, is believed to have made a profit of

about £100 million from the sale of the stake, which raised a total of £560 million.

The sale ends months of speculation over a growing rift between the two companies with Bernard Arnault, chairman of LVMH, and a board member at Guinness, apparently dissatisfied by Guinness's lacklustre share performance. Mr Arnault is believed to have floated the idea of demerging Guinness's brewing division, a plan rejected by Tony Greener, chairman of Guinness and a director at LVMH.

Guinness's weak trading

statement on Wednesday, coupled with a warning over the

impact of currency movements on this year's profits, was seen by many in the City as the final straw for Mr Arnault.

LVMH said it would use the money to help to finance its \$2.5 billion acquisition of a majority stake in DFS, the US duty-free shopping group. But analysts believe that the company may also be looking to make further purchases in the near future, pointing to the fact that LVMH could easily finance the bid from existing resources.

The luxury goods company

is understood to be negotiating to buy out the two minority shareholders in DFS, even

PSBR up as VAT receipts decline

BY JANET BUSH
ECONOMICS EDITOR

GOVERNMENT borrowing in December was higher than City expected, partly because of weak VAT receipts as Britain's consumer revival lost some of its steam at the tail-end of last year.

The public sector borrowing requirement was £2.1 billion last month, compared with City expectations of a figure nearer to £1.1 billion. December's borrowing took the cumulative PSBR for the current tax year to £16.1 billion, compared with £23 billion at the same stage a year ago.

For the full year ending on April 5, the Government is forecasting a PSBR of £2.6 billion and, despite a measure of City disappointment in yesterday's figures, the Treasury said that they were entirely consistent with its forecast at Budget time.

Officials noted that borrowing in December was boosted by £1.2 billion because of shifts in the timing of interest payments related to the new market for gilt strips. These allow investors to split government bonds into paper of shorter maturities, which then attract interest payments in different months. December is one of the months most affected by this activity.

Of slightly more concern in the markets was apparent weakness in VAT receipts, which have clearly slowed over the past two months. David Bloom of HSBC James Capel noted that, although VAT receipts in the first ten months of the financial year were 10 per cent higher than a year ago, this compared with a year-on-year rise of 15 per cent only two months ago.

Nevertheless, the City broadly agreed with the Treasury's view that it will meet this year's PSBR projection.

WEEKEND MONEY

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A guide to
gilt-edged stocks

Steele goes as Storehouse finance director

BY PAUL DURMAN

STOREHOUSE, the Bhs and Mothercare group that has recently come under fire for its financial reporting, is to part company with Dick Steele, its finance director for the past three years.

Criticism has centred on the company's "same-store" sales figures. Storehouse reported its latest figures yesterday, showing an 18 per cent rise in group sales for the six weeks to Christmas Eve, and same business sales up 9 per cent. The news prompted a 17½p rise to 275p in Storehouse's share price, which has fallen heavily over the past nine months.

A Storehouse spokesman,

dismissed suggestions that Mr Steele was leaving because his credibility was damaging the company's share price. He said Storehouse's needs from its finance director had changed. It now required someone who was better able to develop sales and run the business, and had less need of Mr Steele's skills in cost control and other more purely financial matters. Mr Steele will not receive compensation for loss of office.

Mr Steele was previously finance director at Lloyds Chemists, another company that was criticised for its aggressive accounting policies. His replacement is Chris Martin, who will retain his existing responsibilities as finance director of Bhs.

Bhs had a strong Christmas, with sales up nearly 12 per cent, 7.5 per cent coming from same stores. Gifts and menswear were particularly successful. Sarah Charles, head of KPMG's retail consultancy, observed that Storehouse was bouncing back from a poor Christmas in 1995.

However, Mothercare was hit by disappointing sales of children's wear, and the same store numbers dropped 4 per cent. A 0.8 per cent fall in overall sales was blamed on the timing of overseas shipments.



Dick Steele is leaving Storehouse, which has been criticised for its financial reporting

BUSINESS
TODAY

	FTSE 100	4207.7	(+10.2)
Yield	3.70%		
FTSE All share	2061.07	(+5.81)	
Midex	1809.04	(+54.20)	
New York			
Dow Jones	6794.85	(+33.48)*	
S&P Composite	773.86	(+4.11)*	
Federal Funds	5.75%	(5.75%)	
Long Bond Yield	6.55%	(6.55%)	
3-month Interbank	6.4%	(6.4%)	
Life long gilt future (Mar)	111	(110%)	
New York	1,6700*	(1,6700)	
London	1,6752		
S	1,6850		
DM	2,6678	(2,6678)	
FFR	0,6027	(0,6027)	
Yen	125,32	(125,00)	
E Index	96,6	(96,1)	
London close	\$365,15	(\$363,85)	
* denotes midday trading price			

Comet to make 1,200 redundant

BY FRASER NELSON

MORE than 1,200 jobs are to go at Comet, the electrical retail group, as part of a major reorganisation after the acquisition of the Norweb retail chain last year.

Kingfisher, Comet's parent company, which bought the Norweb business for £29 million three months ago, yesterday named 54 stores that it plans to close.

Comet said the cuts were just the first stage of its plan to integrate the two store groups. It is taking a redundancy costs of a £2 million budget to cover the operation.

While all of the job losses are coming from Norweb's staff, Comet is closing 26 of its own stores and moving staff to other branches. Some 28 Norweb stores are being closed, and the remaining 26 Norweb stores are to rejoin as Comet, with no job losses.

Comet, which inherited 138 Norweb stores when it was merged, said that it would complete the reorganisation with 250 stores, compared with the

Electra Fleming sued over HMSO

BY GAVIN LUMSDEN

ELECTRA FLEMING, the venture capitalist that led last year's successful bid for HMSO, the privatised government stationer and printer, is being sued for more than £125 million.

Michael Allen, of MA Media Partners, claims his company is owed £543,437.50 after it introduced Electra Fleming to Rupert Pennant-Rea, former Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, last April.

Mr Pennant-Rea and Electra Fleming went on to form the National Publishing Group (NPG) that won control of HMSO, now renamed the Stationery Office, at the end of September with a controversially low bid of £54 million. The sale is under investigation by the National Audit Office.

MA Media and Electra Fleming agreed an introduction fee of 1 per cent of the first £20 million, and 0.25 per cent of the remaining total consideration price.

MA Media claims the total

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Bank of Ireland Mortgages

Cable job

Cable and Wireless, the telecoms group, yesterday appointed a senior Granada director as chief executive of its new cable company. The new company, formed from Mercury and three cable groups, will drop the Mercury title.

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28

Siemens may buy Parsons

BY OLIVER ALGUST

SIEMENS, the German electronics group, could expand its £1 billion presence on Tyneside with the acquisition of Parsons from Rolls-Royce. But half of the 1,800 staff at the closure-threatened turbine-generator plant are still likely to lose their jobs.

Jürgen Gehrels, the Siemens chief executive, said: "We are always looking at business opportunities, especially those where we can strengthen the position of our individual businesses and areas where we could improve the service we provide to our customers. I don't know yet whether Parsons is such a business opportunity, but we are looking at it."

A four-strong team of executives spent three days at the plant last week. A Rolls-Royce spokesman said there were a number of potential purchasers, but he declined to name them.

An acquisition of Parsons by Siemens, now a leading electronics manufacturer in Britain with over 10,000 UK employees, would significantly boost the German company's presence on Tyneside. Last year it created 500 high-skill jobs at its nearby semiconductor plant, the most modern of its kind in Europe.

THE SUNDAY TIMES
Deutsche Morgan
Greifell, the City's
accident-prone investment
house, has been rocked
by the resignation of the
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Nicola Horlick,
after allegations of
staff poaching...
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Times tomorrow

C&W picks Granada director as chief of new merged group

BY ERIC REGULY

CABLE AND WIRELESS yesterday appointed a senior Granada executive as chief executive of Cable and Wireless Communications (CWC), the company to be formed by the merger of Mercury and three cable companies. It said the Mercury name would disappear from the group.

Graham Wallace, 48, a Granada director and chief executive of its restaurants division, is to join CWC in two weeks at an annual salary of £375,000, plus an undisclosed number of CWC options.

Dick Brown, chief executive

of C&W, which will own slightly more than half of CWC, was appointed CWC's chairman. A finance director has yet to be hired.

Mr Brown denied speculation that the highly complex merger of the Nynex, Bell CableMedia and Videotron cable companies, each of which is publicly listed, and Mercury was running into potentially insurmountable obstacles. "We're still on schedule to complete the merger by the spring," he said.

CWC will offer cable TV, telephony and Internet ser-

vices, long-distance services through Mercury, and intends to develop a range of interactive products. Mr Brown would not comment on speculation that CWC is preparing to offer digital TV services, with as many as 200 channels, in competition with BSkyB, the satellite broadcaster 40 per cent owned by News International, owner of *The Times*. However, analysts expect the entire cable industry to launch digital channels late this year.

The three cable companies will give CWC 700,000 customers and access to another

five million. Mr Brown said that CWC will also offer mobile-phone services, though it is not known whether this will be done directly through One-2-One, which is owned equally by C&W and US West, the American regional phone company that owns 27 per cent of TeleWest, Britain's biggest cable company.

Mr Brown has hinted that One-2-One will eventually be absorbed into CWC. But Gary Ames, chief executive of US West International, said that it has no plans to relinquish joint control of One-2-One.

Mr Wallace, an engineer and accountant by training, joined Granada in 1986 and was later involved in the merger of BSB and Sky to form BSkyB. In 1992 he became chief executive of Granada's rentals business. He took over the restaurants division in 1995 and oversaw their merger with the Forte catering business last year.

At Granada, Mr Wallace is to be replaced by Don Davenport, who had been responsible for contract catering, roadside restaurants and motorway operations.

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

Liberty unleashing pensions price war

A PRICE WAR is looming in the personal pensions market as Liberty International prepares to launch a low-cost pension to rival those offered by Virgin and Eagle Star. The new pension, available from Tuesday, will be sold by telephone only and will have a small management fee of about 1 per cent, plus an additional monthly charge.

Liberty intends to offer a group personal pension product later this year. Marc Hommel, director of Liberty International Pensions, said that its salesforce was not paid on a commission basis and was not under pressure to do "a hard sell". Liberty International, which also owns Capital Shopping Centres, intends to start selling pensions in its out-of-town malls later this year. Virgin entered the personal pensions market in November, saying that consumers mistrusted the life insurance industry and claiming that its simple products with transparent charges would revolutionise the market.

Low-cost pensions in pipeline, page 31

Northern changes start

THE first changes at Northern Electric since the regional electricity company went into the control of CE Electric began yesterday with the announced sale of its stake in a combined heat and power services company. Northern Electric said that the sale of the one-third interest was expected to be completed within a month to an industrial buyer. Meanwhile boardroom changes are awaited after CE Electric, which won Northern in a hostile bid, moved in a set of directors this month.

EU jobless rate steady

THE European Union's average seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was unchanged at 10.9 per cent for the seventh consecutive month in November, representing 18.2 million jobless. The unemployment rate was 10.8 per cent in November 1995. The EU rate is double the US rate of 5.4 per cent and three times Japan's 3.4 per cent rate. Of the 15 EU nations, Britain recorded the largest fall over the month, down 0.4 percentage points from October to 7.5 per cent. Spain had the highest rate (22.3 per cent) and Luxembourg the lowest (3.3 per cent).

Airbus partner deal

AIRBUS, the consortium that includes British Aerospace, yesterday signed up Fokker Aviation of The Netherlands and Belair of Belgium as design partners in a bid to revive the flagging fortunes of the A3XX, the planned 550-seat superjumbo. Boeing, the world's leading planemaker, is already marketing an enlarged version of the 747. Airbus said that it is negotiating with other aerospace companies worldwide with the aim of placing up to 40 per cent of the A3XX work content with new partners.

TOURIST RATES

	Bank Buy	Bank Sell	Bank Buy	Bank Sell
Australia \$	2.29	2.32	2.29	2.32
Austria Sch	15.80	15.30	15.80	15.30
Belgium Fr	58.06	53.76	58.06	53.76
Canada \$	2.251	2.191	2.251	2.191
Denmark Kr	10.53	10.20	10.53	10.20
Denmark Kr	10.78	10.28	10.78	10.28
Finland Mkt	0.55	0.50	0.55	0.50
France Fr	8.42	8.77	8.42	8.77
Germany Mkt	2.25	2.20	2.25	2.20
Germany Dr	4.34	4.08	4.34	4.08
Hong Kong \$	13.58	12.28	13.58	12.28
Iceland Kr	1.20	1.18	1.20	1.18
Iceland Kr	1.07	1.05	1.07	1.05
Israel Shek	5.75	5.10	5.75	5.10
Italy Lira	27.08	25.53	27.08	25.53
Japan Yen	209.90	193.90	209.90	193.90

Wray tables higher bid for Forest

BY ALASDAIR MURRAY

THE battle to win control of Nottingham Forest Football Club took a new twist yesterday when Bridgford, the consortium led by Nigel Wray, raised its offer by £5 million.

Bridgford is offering a cash injection of £15 million, while Forest shareholders have the option of a 10 per cent stake in the new company or £1.7 million cash. The company also tabled a second offer which includes £13 million in new cash and a 20 per cent stake for existing shareholders.

Bridgford, which is also backed by Irving Scholar — the former Tottenham Hotspur chairman — is one of three consortiums competing to win the support of the club's 204 shareholders.

Last week Forest shareholders rejected a bid from a consortium led by Sandy Anderson, former head of Porterbrook. A third consortium led by Albert Scardino, husband of Marjorie Scardino, Pearson's new chief executive, has yet to make a formal offer.



Simon Bentley with camping equipment from Blacks Leisure, whose sales have leapt

Blacks Leisure strides out

SHARES in Blacks Leisure, which rose by an extraordinary 680 per cent in 1996, jumped again yesterday after the leisure wear retailer and distributor reported a strong rise in sales and profit margins (Martin Barrow writes).

The company said that total sales rose 45 per cent higher in the 44 weeks to

January 4, while sales on a like-for-like basis were up 22 per cent.

Retail operations, consisting of the First Spots and Blacks Outdoor chains, enjoyed a 22 per cent rise in like-for-like sales. Simon Bentley, the chairman and chief executive, said that the new ActiveVenture format traded

ahead of budget over Christmas.

In the first ten months of the current year, 28 stores were opened, giving Blacks 105 outlets. The company also said that distribution operations, embracing O'Neill and Fila UK, continued to trade well.

Blacks shares touched a new high of 406½p yesterday before easing back to 401½p, a gain of 16½p. A year ago, the shares were worth 49½p.

Analysts yesterday upgraded pre-tax profit forecasts for the current year to February 28 to about £10 million, from forecasts of £9.25 million. The company earned just £2.1 million in the previous 12 months.

Mis-selling fear over bonds risk

BY GAVIN LUMSDEN

BUSINESS figures released by Scottish Mutual yesterday reveal it could be vulnerable to mis-selling accusations over its high income bonds.

The company sold £221 million, nearly a quarter of last year's new business, into a high income bond guaranteeing 10.5 per cent annual income and capital security if neither the FTSE 100 or S&P 500 indices fall over five years.

The Institute of Actuaries criticised the marketing of such products last month for misleading investors into thinking there is no risk of indices falling when it estimates the risk at 20 per cent.

There are fears that the Scottish insurer, a wholly owned subsidiary of Abbey National, could put its reputation at risk if such products do not deliver according to investors' expectations. One analyst said: "If the wording in their literature is inadequate or the product does not perform, they will either have to pay up or be open to charges of mis-selling — of course, they are not alone in that risk."

Graham Pottinger, Scottish Mutual's chief executive, said: "We have looked at all our marketing and are confident that it is clear to investors that their capital could be at risk." But he added that the risk had not been quantified.

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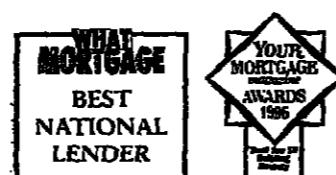
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THE TIMES SATURDAY JANUARY 18 1997

A WORKING WEEK FOR: TONY MASON

Majestic lifestyle based on a nose for a deal

Paul Durman meets a man at the heart of a wine warehouse operation, whose buying decisions hold the key to commercial success

Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday

THERE can be few businessmen who can tell you with conviction: "Quality control is always exciting." Yet this is what Tony Mason says; and there is little reason to doubt him.

Mason is in charge of purchasing for Majestic Wine, the company that sells a million cases of wine a year to middle-class professionals. His is the key role in deciding what wines will be available in the converted pearl stations, churches and other oddities that comprise Majestic's warehouse stores.

The wine must first pass through Majestic's headquarters in Watford to be quality tested by Mason and his team.

"We taste a bottle of everything as it arrives to make sure it's up to scratch," he explains. "That's always a nice moment in the afternoon when we taste the day's delivery. We bring in competitors' ranges and taste those, too. Those are always fun and interesting. It's a tough job but someone has to do it."

Mason, 51, the company's trading director, is the heart of Majestic, which next week releases its first results since it listed on the Alternative Investment Market. He was a founder of the company in 1981, and has been involved with wine warehouse ever since — though not always with Majestic, and not always with the success that the company enjoys at present. He is renowned for his deal-making, and is always on the lookout for interesting "parcels" of wine.

Debbie Worton, marketing director of Majestic, says: "He's a bit like a truffle hound when he gets the scent. You never know quite what he's going to come up with next."

A classic example came last year when he picked up 47,000 cases of wine for a knockdown £650,000, or so — from Sweden of all places. Mason jumped on a plane to take advantage of a liquidation of stock by Sweden's state liquor board. Majestic's Swedish promotion was a great success.

Mason's trading flair is built on an entire career spent in the wine business. He came into the industry by chance when, on leaving school in 1962, he went to work for Fortnum & Mason, bottling and labelling wines by hand in the huge cellar. Fortnum's then owned under Pimlico. He readily acknowledges that his initial enthusiasm was "more about being 17 and working in Soho in 1962". Mason went on to learn about retailing, working for the men he regards as the two great wine merchants of their time — the mercurial Ahmed Poché, who founded Oddbins, and Brian Barnett, the founder of Augustus Barnett.

The allure of wine has helped Majestic to make a sparkling stock market debut. Its shares, placed at 160p in November, have quickly raced to 285p. City present

tations attracted much more interest than larger but duller companies.

Mason dispels romantic notions that his job is all about driving through the French countryside, occasionally stopping off to share a leisurely bottle with local farmers. Much of the business is conducted at trade fairs. Trips to the vineyards are tightly scheduled, with six or eight visits squeezed in each day over a three or four-day visit.

"We spend 15 minutes talking to you and taste all the wines you have available. We don't socialise or fraternise. We taste and say, 'That wine and that wine, I like. Send me a sample and your best price'.

We never, never commit to purchase abroad because it tastes totally different abroad than it does in the tasting office."

Mason and his team each make 12 buying trips a year. Purchasing has to dovetail with Majestic's regular promotions, seven each year.

Mason insists that every wine is tasted with the price chalked clearly on the bottle. He says the best wine buyers come from the sales side since they have a clear feel for what customers want to buy. The danger to avoid is buyers buying for their own more educated palates.

Mason's own specialities are the classic French appellations of the Loire Valley, Rhône and Burgundy; he has handed over responsibility for Bordeaux to a younger colleague. He says he is too old to buy New World wines from Australia, California or South Africa. Despite their popularity, Mr Mason remains suspicious.

"I don't particularly enjoy the very obvious fruity flavours of New World wine. They're nice to drink on their own, but they don't work with food." He adds: "It's that element in, say, a claret which you might find quite difficult — the dryness, the astringency — which, actually, if you're drinking claret with roast lamb, is terribly, terribly important."

After 34 years in the wine business, he is much more attracted to the complexities of Bordeaux. He adds: "That's what happens with the consumer, actually. If you're drinking Australian Shiraz now, you'll be enjoying claret in 20 years' time in a way you wouldn't enjoy it now."

He believes his tastes are in tune with Majestic's customers, who spend an average of more than £450 a bottle — which means there are thousands of cases of wine going out at £9.99. Indeed, Majestic's most successful product at Christmas was a Bize-Leroy Royal Burgundy at £9.99.

Straightforward and unassuming, Mason remains some way from being a wine snob. His staff say that the greatest accolade he can pay a wine is: "That will be really good with sausages." He says he is interested in other people's reactions, and likes to try out Majestic's wines on his family, including his two daughters, both in their late 20s. Gallingly, his mother continues to insist that the only place to



Tony Mason, Majestic's trading director. His staff say that the greatest accolade he can pay a wine is: "That will be really good with sausages."

buy wine is Sainsbury's. "She's quite good for me," he grins.

His home in St Albans betrays another of his passions — steam trains. He even has a narrow-gauge train, such as you might see in an amusement park, in his halfway. He is also a passionate Frank Sinatra fan and a keen walker.

Mason first became involved with warehouse selling in the late 1970s when he was working for North West Vintners, the company that held the liquor concession for Kwik Save. North West Vintners had a warehouse in Hampstead, but the wines, based around the Kwik Save product range, were not right.

Working as his own buyer, Mason tried again when he moved on to Majestic Vintners in 1980. Although the firm succumbed to losses sustained on its fine-wine brokering activities the following year, Mason was convinced he could make warehouses work. When Giles Clarke and Esme Johnston bought Majestic from the receivers, Mason joined them as retail director.

He says the Battersea store was the first that really took off. "Battersea was being inhabited by people who worked in the City and the West End, the new yuppie class [who] were obviously going to be

sophisticated enough to be regular wine drinkers."

The basic formula has changed little in the intervening years, though Majestic's progress has been more chequered. The company embarked on an ill-fated Californian venture in the mid-1980s, prompting Mason to leave to set up Wizard Wine.

He failed to realise how sharply property prices had moved and was soon struggling, having started Wizard without enough money. He was rescued by one of his customers — John Aphor, who ran the Bejam frozen food chain. Bejam bought

holdings of shares and options promise him a comfortable retirement rather than significant wealth.

Mason expresses no regrets, and is delighted that Majestic is now a quoted company. "It's fabulous to give a value and a meaning to all the years of hard work," he says.

Salaries in the wine trade are modest — Mason is Majestic's second-highest paid director on £42,500 a year. The rewards lie elsewhere. "Buying and selling wine is a nice business, and it attracts nice people," he says. "I've got friends who earn six-figure salaries who work in the computer industry or in insurance businesses, and they think, 'God, it must be bloody wonderful!'. Compared with what they have to do, I suppose it is."

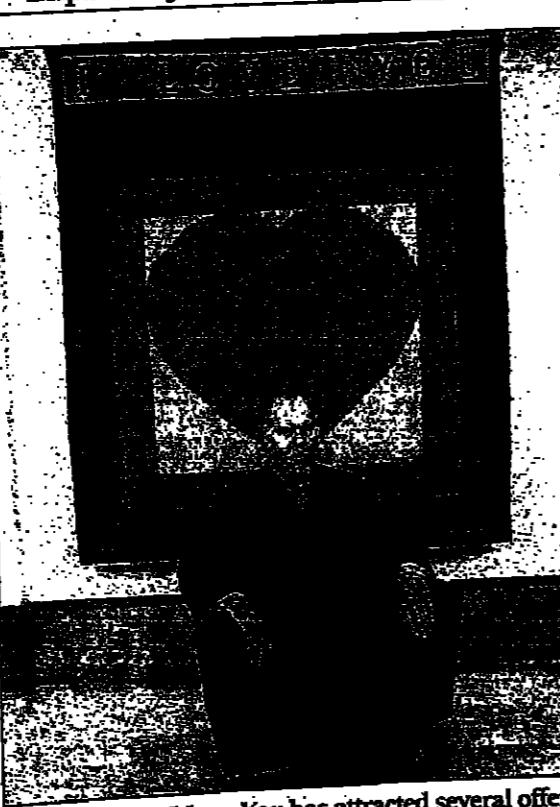
The gallery where art lovers can jet in for a flying visit

Joanna Pitman says BA's collection improves journeys from Heathrow

I magine a modern gallery space, large well lit, quiet and furnished with comfortable chairs and cafeterias, that is open 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, and is guaranteed 1,000 wealthy visitors a day, 3,000 on peak days. Not a bad place to show your wares if you are an up-and-coming artist. In fact, the gallery has just opened in Heathrow Terminal 4, in British Airways' business, first class and Concorde lounges.

And this is real art, not lamentable wallpaper art in non-controversial pastels, which you normally try to avoid looking at in airport lounges. BA has quietly gathered over the years an interesting collection of works by living British artists, which have been hidden in the chairman's office and in boardrooms and lounges, lost somewhere within the myriad of BA buildings scattered around Heathrow. The collection is a fine one, with works by Bridget Riley, Paul Huxley, John Hoyland, David Nash and Sean Scully, all recognised artists of the Seventies and Eighties whose delicate work has stood the harsh tests of time.

British Airways has now decided to excavate its collection, as it were, to retrieve it from boardrooms and offices and hang it where its most precious customers can see it — in the executive lounges. In addition, the company has borrowed a range of works by other contemporary artists, on loan from a number of London galleries and from the Royal College of Art. With



Peter Blake's 'I Love You' has attracted several offers

the help of Artwise, the art consultancy, the company plans to open up all of its 180 lounges around the world to collections by living local artists.

The collections will be changed every six months so that executive travellers who are regular visitors to London will have the benefit of a living gallery that is constantly changing. Heathrow Terminal 4 lounges are

from businessmen, perhaps feeling guilty on their way home from a long business trip.

As yet they are not for sale, but intended for display and for the edification of BA passengers and staff. Guaranteed to gladden jet-lagged eyes is the clutch of wonderful jewel-like works from the brush of Howard Hodgkin — these have somehow escaped the eagle eye of the curator at the current Hayward Gallery show. There is a huge John Piper tapestry hanging over the entrance to the lounge; there are two substantial works by Dame Elisabeth Frink and two impressive prints by David Hockney. Eduardo Paolozzi is included, as is Paula Rego.

The works speak mainly of contentment and joy. Some are calm, some are boisterously lively. Many of the Blakes are finely detailed works and the current display includes elements of his well-known Alphabet. There are eight works by Eileen Cooper, on loan from the Jason Rhodes Gallery, all monumental in scale but also joyful lyrical pieces.

Of course, in every location the art has to appeal to as wide a range of international travellers as possible, and overtly political or religious themes must be avoided. To appeal to all and avoid being bland is not easy. But Artwise has managed to include plenty of tone and temper in its first hang. If you are a business class traveller, be sure to leave plenty of time before your flight to appreciate the show.

Within days of his tapestries, paintings and prints being hung, travellers were asking whether they could buy them and take them there and then. One tapestry entitled 'I Love You' has attracted several offers

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STOCK MARKET

MICHAEL CLARK

Share prices breach 4,200 for first time

SHARE prices on both sides of the Atlantic hit fresh highs, with London breaching 4,200 for the first time.

Turnover in London reached more than 1.2 billion shares in a day of mixed trading that saw the FT-SE 100 index halve an early 21 point lead to close 10.2 higher at a record 4,207.7. That stretches the rise on the week to 11.2.

The boost to turnover came from the expiry of the FT-SE 100 index options, which had dealers scrambling to cover short positions before the deadline. Once the options had expired, the profit-takers moved in and left prices closing below their best levels of the day.

Guinness accounted for a large percentage of overall turnover, with the price retreating 4p to 432p as 266.55 million shares changed hands. LVMH, the French luxury goods group, has unloaded a large part of its 21 per cent stake in the company.

Goldman Sachs, the US securities house, handled the placing of 135 million shares at 41p. Guinness acquired 44 million of these, amounting to 2.5 per cent, for cancellation. Last March Guinness bought back 100 million of its own shares. LVMH continues to hold a 14.2 per cent stake.

There was further heavy turnover in Hanson, headed by Lord Hanson, as the price firmed 3p to 92p. A total of 46.7 million shares changed hands, with much of the demand stemming from the US before the final stage of the group's demerger programme next month.

Talk of a break-up lifted Redland 8p to 342p. The Pannier Gordon, the broker, set tongues wagging by suggesting a break-up of the business after meeting the company earlier this week.

Pannier is convinced that the French aggregates business will be sold, paving the way for further sales, including its domestic aggregates business, which could be worth up to £30 million. Pannier has set a target price for the shares in the short term of 400p.

Worries that the rail regulator may force Railtrack to spend heavily on its infrastructure left the shares down 15p to 388.1p. As a result, Société Générale Strauss Turnbull, the broker, has turned bearish of the stock.



Shares were heavy turnover in Hanson, headed by Lord Hanson

P&O fell 18p to 624p as UBS, the broker, cut its profit forecast for 1997 by £55 million to £375 million. It blamed the move on the continuing problems at the container shipping division.

Brokers warmed to a trading statement from Storehouse, with the price closing 17p higher at 275p. Last March Guinness bought back 100 million of its own shares. LVMH continues to hold a 14.2 per cent stake.

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retreated 3p to 830p on profit taking. Earlier this week the shares were pushed sharply higher on the back of positive comments from Kleinwort Benson, the broker.

Bioocompabiles International, one of the most popular share tips for 1996, enjoyed a new lease of life with the price surging 42p to 905p as one big seller withdrew from the market. Kleinwort Benson, the broker, continues to buy the shares after making Bioocompabiles one of its naps for the year.

A profits warning left **Corporate Executive Search**, which is listed on the AIM, down 14p to 24p. The group, which specialises in finding jobs for executives in the high-technology and finance industries, says that half-year results this month will show a modest increase in profits. But it adds that operating profits for the full year will be substantially below last time.

Multimedia Corporation also dropped 14p to 21p on a profits warning. The group reported a 22 per cent increase in like-for-like sales during the first 11 weeks of the year. Nick Bubb, retail analyst, at MeesPierson, the bro-

ker, has now increased his pre-tax profits forecast for the full year from £19.5 million to £10 million.

Whispers that a line of six million shares was overhanging the market depressed **Rank Organisation**, which ended the session 8p down at 41p. It transpired that a line of one million had passed through the market at 42p.

Yorkshire Electricity, one of two remaining independent regional electricity companies,

retailer reported better than expected sales growth of 14 per cent at Bhs, but trading at Mothercare proved disappointing. Brokers are still looking for full-year pre-tax profits of between £120 million and £123 million for the year.

Kingfisher ended 21p better at 64.1p after confirming plans to shed 1,200 jobs from its 2,800 workforce at Norweb Retailing that it bought in November. The job losses are part of the restructuring re-

quired to merge Norweb Retailing with its chain of Comet electrical stores.

Blacks Leisure, the best performing share of 1996, rose 16p to 401p on the back of a positive trading update. The group reported a 22 per cent increase in like-for-like sales during the first 11 weeks of the year. Nick Bubb, retail analyst, at MeesPierson, the bro-

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Yorkshire Electricity, one of two remaining independent regional electricity companies,

MOVERS OF THE WEEK

Current price	Week's change	Brokers' recommendation
Bank of Scotland 334p	+37p	Brokers' recommendation
Bank of Scotland Leisure 48p	+10p	Returns from suspension
Barclays 70p	+4p	Bumper profits
Barclays 100.1p	+100.1p	Agrees merger terms
Barclays 101.10	+101.10	Bid approaches
Barclays 101.10	+101.10	Company baffled by recent rise
Barclays 101.10	+101.10	Speculative buying
Barclays 101.10	+101.10	Profit warning
Barclays 101.10	+101.10	Renewed institutional buying

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Blacks Leisure, the best performing share of 1996, rose 16p to 401p on the back of a positive trading update. The group reported a 22 per cent increase in like-for-like sales during the first 11 weeks of the year. Nick Bubb, retail analyst, at MeesPierson, the bro-

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Blacks Leisure, the best performing share of 1996, rose 16p to 40



SHARES 36

Food stores
safe in
uncertain times

WEEKEND MONEY

SOCIETIES 38

Woolwich
savers left
out in cold



THE TIMES PERSONAL FINANCE NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

Battle to win investors' votes



ANGUS MENESE

Gavin Lumsden and Anne Ashworth check out a new wave of Pep products being offered ahead of the election

While the Prime Minister ponders the most propitious date for the general election, the financial services industry is busy making money out of the political uncertainty.

Legal & General and Lloyds have launched schemes this week that they claim will help investors to survive any decline in the market that could follow a Labour victory, or the vicissitudes of a hung Parliament.

Insurance companies are also trying to anticipate pension reforms that could be passed by Labour, attempting to show that they can provide pensions at low cost (see below).

As this election-inspired personal equity plan (Pep) and pension sales drive gets into full swing, investors seeking specific guidance on the election's impact on share values will be disappointed to learn that there is little consensus among analysts on the direction of the market if Tony Blair, the Labour leader, moves into No 10.

Many maintain that a Labour victory has already been priced into the market and still expect shares to rise 10 per cent this year. Others believe that shares would start to fall only if Labour made a highly unpopular move after some months in office.

Labour is making every effort to please private investors and City institutions alike ahead of the polls, without making any specific policy statements. The party has been making much of its desire to offer affordable pensions to the 11 million people currently not in occupational

schemes. It also wants to encourage millions more to save with flexible independent savings accounts.

This week Michael O'Brien,

Labour City spokesman, restated his party's commitment to economic stability and low inflation, words intended to reassure those who remember the last time Labour was in power.

But despite Mr O'Brien's soothing words, Legal & General expects that the index will rumble if his party gains power.

More surprisingly, in a week when the index continued to hit new records, the company is also pessimistic about the market's chances, even if John Major is returned to power.

L&G analysts believe that a hung Parliament would spell volatility, while a small Labour majority would mean in-fighting on the Labour front and back benches, also leading to market nervousness.

A large majority for Mr Blair, says L&G, would knock share values because there would be fears of radical action. If Mr Major were to be re-elected, his party would continue to be plagued by dissent over Europe — also bad news for the index.

For those alarmed by all

these predictions, L&G's new General Election Pep offers a seemingly irresistible 140 per cent of the growth in the FT-SE 100 index of leading shares over five years, plus the return of the capital invested.

L&G claims that its Pep

minimises the risk of a market

fall because it will take the average level of the index in the first 12 months of the five-year period of the Pep as its starting point, and the last 12-month average as its ending point.

Taking a 12-month average would normally halve the sum you could expect to receive. But L&G predicts that the market will fall this year and says that the average level and starting point could be below its present level, around 4.207.

The lower the figure, it argues, the more potential for growth, without the exposure to large one-day falls. So if the FT-SE 100 rises to an average price of 6,400 in its last 12 months of the five-year period you would get 61.2 per cent return. When multiplied by the promised 140 per cent this gives a total return of 85.7 per cent.

That may sound attractive, but the figures bear closer examination.

L&G has also extended the election idea to its pensions

range, with a five-year Guaranteed Equity Fund. Here it could make sense if you are planning to retire soon and want to protect your gains to date.

The new Safety First fund from the unit trust arm of

Lloyds offers a fixed minimum price for your investment, protecting against sharp falls in share prices.

The starting Safety price is 90.25p. A new price will be set each year if the market rises, but not at a lower level than the initial Safety price. Similar funds have been launched by

Govt, NatWest and Edinburgh Fund Managers.

If you are truly alarmed by the possible impact of a Labour victory on your wealth, you might be better off in a fund that does not lock you in for such a long period. You can take shelter for a while and venture out again if everything seems calm.

term of the Pep is four years, not five.

Over four years and multiplied by 140 per cent, the capital return works out at 42 per cent. Convert this back into an annual rate and the result is 7.1 per cent, slightly less than the average 7.5 per cent growth figure for the market.

You might conclude that this middling return is not much compensation for having your money locked up for five years.

You may also wonder why, if you are receiving no income, you should be investing in a Pep, the principal attraction of which is the shelter it provides against income tax and capital gains tax.

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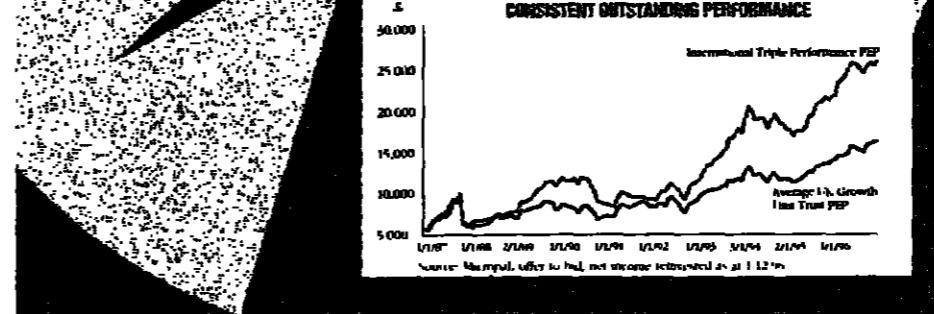
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Election shadow, page 36

WEEKEND MONEY
is edited by Anne Ashworth

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Low-cost pensions in the pipeline

Labour has traditionally been regarded as the enemy of the personal pension, partly because it objects to the high fees deducted from premiums.

As the party has no intention of relying only on the state pension, there is little chance of personal pensions being scrapped altogether should Labour form the next government. Some of

the party's more traditional-minded members would like to see a national pension fund set up to invest in ethical and government projects.

However, the new guard are planning a "stakeholder pension" to replace the state earnings-related pension scheme (Serps), the additional state scheme, and to rival personal plans. These would

be provided through partnerships between the State and the private sector, with an emphasis on low cost and simplicity. The plans would have built-in life insurance. Savings plans would also be encouraged.

Marc Hommel, a director of Liberty International Pensions, said that John Denham, Labour's pensions spokesman, has been careful to talk about partnership schemes with the private sector.

Mr Hommel says that any government, be it Conservative or Labour run, will have to consider abolishing the rules that limit the amount of tax-free pension contributions a taxpayer can make. "It makes

Continued on page 32, col 4

Case for cash from Gas

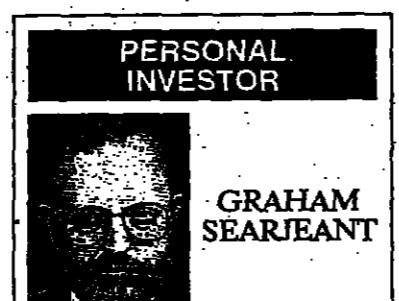
Investors normally have a duty to promote the long-term health of the business they jointly own. But there are exceptions. British Gas shareholders have to decide what to do about one next month. For the clearest case arises when officialdom is bent on a company's financial destruction.

This policy is embodied in the 1995 Gas Act, which left the group's supply business liable for about £30 billion of uneconomic contracts, and in the later Ofgas plan to force BG's Transco pipeline business to subsidise competition. Worst of all, this policy is bipartisan.

The 1.7 million victims at least have a perfect response to party canvassers asking for our vote at the general election. Whether they are Conservative, Labour or Liberal Democrat, just say "Sorry, I am a British Gas shareholder".

In the first eight years, shares in the privatised monopoly performed in line with the UK market average, even a little better during the recession: no "excess" profits. During the past two years, the share average has risen 30 per cent. British Gas shares have fallen roughly the same. At 23p, Merrill Lynch's European utilities team still says: "British Gas strikes us as the most overvalued in our research universe."

Few investors would choose to back either of the group's two big regulated businesses from scratch. British Gas Trading, which supplies 19 million customers with gas, faces a progressive loss of market share with no upside and low margins. Costs are bound to stay higher than newcomers' and pension costs will soon rise by £5 million a year. To complete the happy picture, it still has "take-or-pay" contracts to buy gas at above today's prices, signed when it had to supply all the gas people wanted. On best estimates, which could be wildly wrong, these contracts have a value to



PERSONAL
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GRAHAM
SEARJEANT

would have little equity left to eliminate. It must allow reasonable finance costs. The board, by contrast, aims to restructure British Gas in its best long-term trading interests — normally commendable. It wants to demerge British Gas Trading, as officialdom wishes, to compete independently in a wider utility service market. Sadly, Trading would be insolvent on its own. So the prize Morecambe Bay gasfields, worth £2 billion to £2.5 billion, are thrown in to form the new quoted vehicle Centrica, already nicknamed Cedrica. Management is likely to unwind gas deals in exchange for most of Morecambe.

Good money is being thrown after bad. Dividends from the rump BG plc will be roughly halved and Centrica will pay nothing. The plan, designed to cope with the "take-or-pay" problem, is out of date. But management is stretched and committed, and things are now so bad that it cannot borrow more on Transco as it is likely to unwind gas deals in exchange for most of Morecambe.

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In this crazy situation, shareholders want their board to withdraw as much equity as possible. Tax permitting, it should hive off British Gas oil and gas production assets before these too are lost. At prices now being paid, unregulated businesses must be worth £4.6 billion of the group's £9 billion market value. The cost of take-or-pay contracts would ideally be met by drawing debt on Transco, which even Ofgas reckons to be worth £11.7 billion gross. Transco's net profits should all go in dividends, since no expansion is justified. Once Transco is debt-laden, Ofgas

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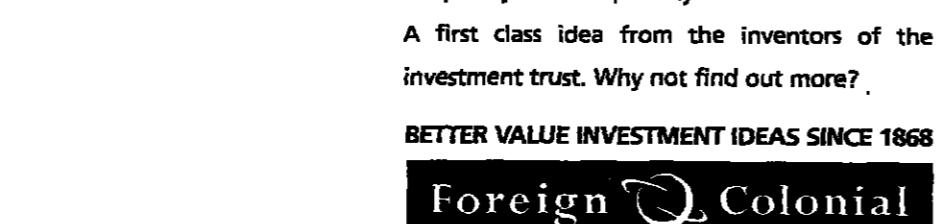
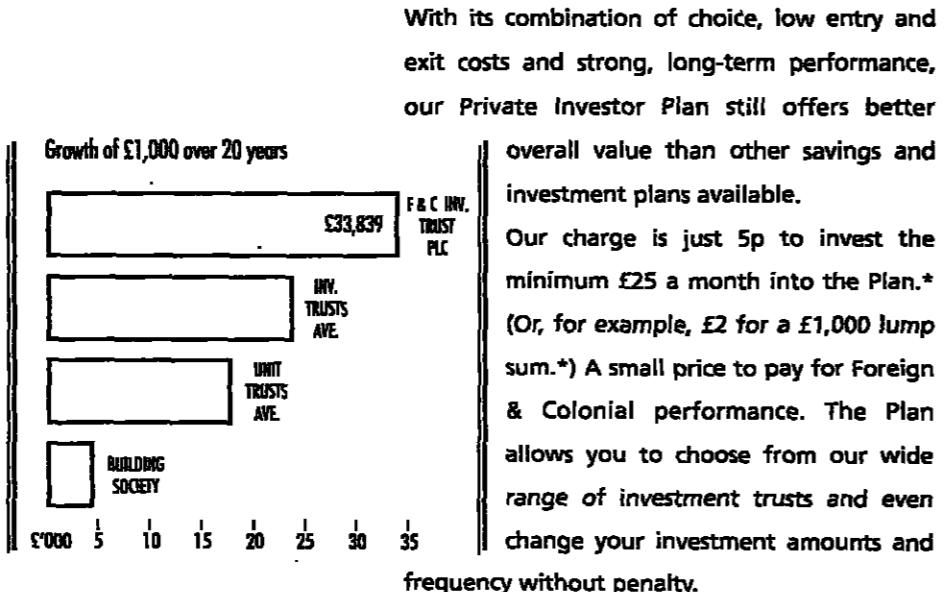
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Credit cards can save holders from embarrassing moments but rates vary and it may pay to switch to another issuer

Transatlantic temptation

Gavin Lumsden on the attraction of switching to US credit cards

If your credit card is suffering a Christmas spending hangover, you could switch to a card with a lower rate. Many small issuers, particularly the US firms such as MBNA International and Capital One, are trying to make the switch as easy as possible and are offering low introductory rates to tempt you across. They want to break the stranglehold of the seven high street banks which dominate 55 per cent of the credit card market in the UK despite their high charges.

The latest challenge is from RBS Advanta, a joint venture between the Royal Bank of Scotland and Advanta, a US credit card issuer, which is offering an introductory rate of 9.9 APR on its standard and gold Visa cards until January 1998. The APR will then rise to 8.88 per cent above the base rate, currently 6 per cent. On today's terms this would give an APR of 15.9 per cent for purchases and 18.3 per cent for

cash advances, much better than the 20-plus per cent rates available from the high street issuers. In addition there is no annual fee and 56 days' interest-free credit.

RBS Advanta claims switching to them could save you up to £99 this year if you are currently borrowing £1,000 on a credit card from a bank.

The most expensive is Barclaycard Standard Visa, Borrow £2,000 with it this year and it will cost you £189 more than with RBS Advanta and £278 more on £3,000. There are similar savings to be had ditching the Visa and Access cards issued by the Midland, Lloyds, NatWest and TSB.

High charging is not restricted to the banks, however. With 20.9 per cent APR on purchases, the GM Visa Card

comes out £88 more expensive on £1,000, £176 on £2,000 and £265 on £3,000.

But Rod Urquhart, managing director of People's Bank Connecticut, one US issuer that has not yet succumbed to making a low-cost offer, says that borrowers could get a shock when the offers end and the APR jumps suddenly. The People's Bank APR is currently 14.4 per cent and there is no annual fee.

To make its argument even more compelling RBS Advanta has also implemented a "transfer and save" service. Once you have filled in the one-page application form and had your creditworthiness scrutinised, the company will send you a card, a PIN number and four cheques. You can then start your ac-

count by sending off a cheque or if this is too much effort ring up with your PIN number.

Mark Austin, planning and development manager at RBS Advanta, says you can also use the cheques to pay off large bills from doctors, solicitors or architects who would not normally accept credit cards. However, there is no cheque guarantee card.

He encourages people to keep their original card going and to pay it off via the phone with the RBS Advanta card. This way you can maintain perks such as air miles and still benefit from a lower rate. There are no plans to add these perks to RBS Advanta, says Mr Austin. "It is much more important that people get a better price," he says.

Mr Urquhart disagrees. He advises people cut up their old cards and avoid the complication of dealing with two balances. But whatever you do you can't lose, he says. "The big winner is the consumer."

Low-cost pensions may spark price war

Continued from page 31

no sense to allow a person under 30 earning £10,000 to put only 17.5 per cent of their earnings into a pension plan," he said. "That will not provide them with a sensible amount to live on when they retire. Both parties will need to look at encouraging people to make better provision for their old age."

Meanwhile, the pensions market is already changing, in anticipation of a new occupant at No 10. Suddenly everyone is eager to offer politically correct low-cost pensions, a develop-

ment that seems likely to result in a price war, reducing charges. After last week's launch by Eagle Star of a no-frills pension plan, Liberty Life will, on Monday, unveil details of its new pension. Liberty pledges that its costs will be as low as those of Eagle Star and Virgin.

Mr Hommel believes that in time traditional pension providers will be forced to reduce and clarify charges. "The long-established companies are going to have to change to survive," he said. "They have unsustainable cost structures, a poor public image, technology which is out of date, and

the baggage of old products and systems."

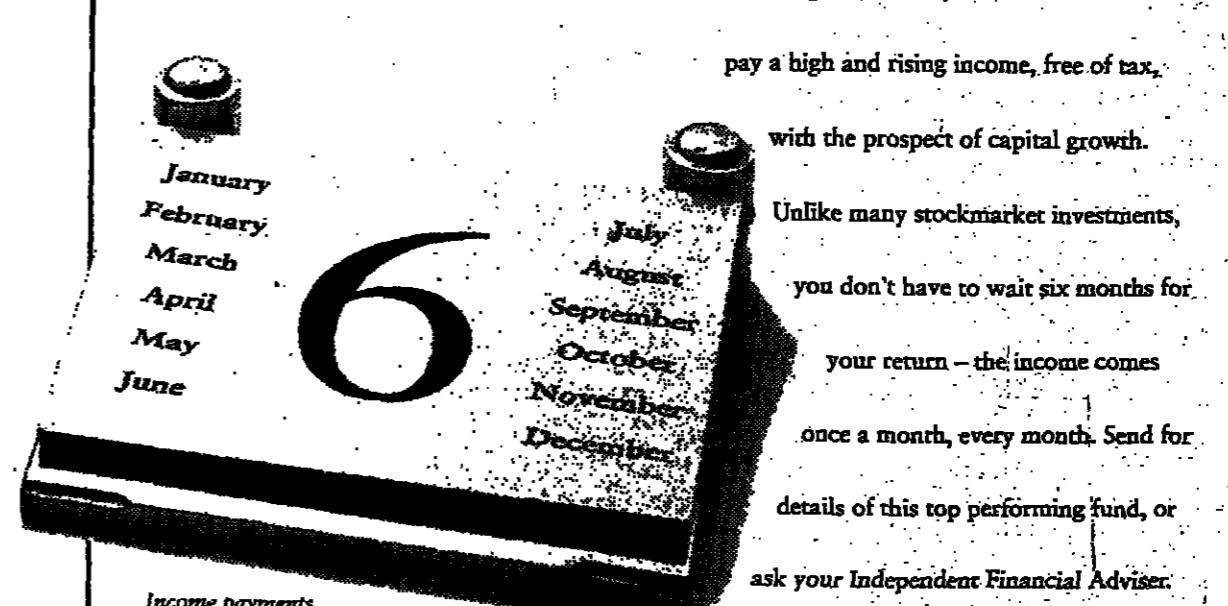
He believes pensions of the future will have to be low-cost and flexible but will still need to tie up money for 25 years. "Temptation" being what it is, people would tend to spend the money they had saved up unless it was out of their grasp. Nevertheless, pension providers will need to allow people to take premium holidays and reduce or increase premiums regularly without penalty. "The workforce is changing and so are working patterns."

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Far from amicable proposal in disguise

One major qualification for advancement at an insurance company has always been the ability to yawn with your mouth shut. But besides being able to disguise boredom, the aspiring senior executive must also possess a talent for tortuous language. The ability to present facts in an unimpeachable manner, while making much of your commitment to plain English, is an essential weapon in the never-ending campaign to keep customers in the dark.

Scottish Amicable has this week announced its plan to shed its mutual status and become a quoted company in a two-stage process (see page 39). One would think that a crack obscurantist team has been at work on the proposals to ensure that the policyholders do not guess that they are getting a poor deal and give a resounding "yes" to the proposals.

Unlike its fellow mutual, the Norwich Union, Scottish Amicable



COMMENT

ANNE ASHWORTH
Personal Finance Editor

has decided not to offer shares to its 1.1 million with-profits policyholders who are the owners of the business. Instead, it has decided to distribute two sets of bonuses to be added to policies of demutualisation and at flotation, in an attempt to appear doubly generous.

The figures, however, tell a different story. The average payout under the first bonus, estimated at £75 million, will be a measly £68. Anyone with a 25-year policy maturing this year should stand to receive £1,503, but this will merely compensate for

less than sparkling past investment performance.

Meanwhile, Scottish Amicable's directors will have the chance of far greater rewards under a new employee share scheme, the terms of which are another piece of impenetrable prose. Provided that the new business fund, to be set up after demutualisation, increases in value by at least 15 per cent a year, the board could be in line for six-figure or seven-figure share packages. How great it is to be an Amicable man!

Asked why its policyholders would

not be receiving shares, Scottish Amicable could give no satisfactory answer. In light of this, it will be interesting to hear its response if a predator emerges offering shares to policyholders. A bid is now an increasingly likely prospect and is the main reason why Scottish Amicable is seeking to change its status, despite its protestations to the contrary. Recently directors have been obsessed with fears of a hostile takeover.

The proposals will be put to the vote in March. Scottish Amicable is hoping that they will be carried without demur. They can take comfort that policyholders rarely rebel because they are never placed in full possession of the facts.

In this instance, policyholders should not blindly believe that the board is acting in their best interests. If shares are good enough for the directors, why should those who own the business be denied a slice of the action?

Sara McConnell on the merits of insuring against random checks by the Revenue

Watch out for that non-racing certainty

Taxpayers should not be panicked into buying insurance that could cover their accountant's fees in case they are picked at random for investigation by the Inland Revenue. According to the leading chartered accountants' body, they can statistically expect random investigations just once every 1,000 years.

The advent of self-assessment for nine million taxpayers who receive a tax return from this April gives the Inland Revenue new powers to investigate people's affairs at random without giving reasons for its actions. Taxpayers will have to produce their records to show that their affairs are in order or else face penalties. Those with accountants will face higher bills for the extra work that the accountant has to do to satisfy the Revenue.

Firms offering insurance against these higher fees are using the Revenue's new powers as a sales hook to persuade people to take out the cover. Brochures warn people that they will be at greater risk of investigation under the new regime. One leaflet from Professional Fee Protection, begins: "Self-assessment - the bare facts: Every business is likely to be investigated... The Revenue no longer needs a reason to investigate you... Mistakes and delays can incur heavy penalties... The Inland Revenue is all powerful and it also has limitless patience..."

Investigations will include even those whose affairs appear to be in order.

Most policies are sold to taxpayers by their accountants who bulk-buy the insurance and sell it on.

But Robert Maas, chairman of the technical committee of the six tax faculty of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, said:

"People can expect to be randomly audited only once every 1,000 years statistically. The Inland Revenue has said it only intended to do 9,000 random audits a year out of nine million. These policies are not necessarily a rip-off, but the risks of an investigation are not that great."

M. Maas, who is also a partner at Blackstone Franks, the firm of chartered accountants, added that anyone taking out a policy needed to read the small print carefully, particularly the policy's definition of what constitutes an investigation.

He said: "The policy should cover any investigation by the Revenue except where there is fraud by the taxpayer. It is unlikely to cover the cost of simple queries but should define at what stage these turn into an investigation."

The cost of cover depends on how the policy is set up. Many accountants pay insurers for all their clients to be covered and then sell the cover on, as premiums of between about

£30 and £60 for about £60,000 of cover. There is nothing to stop accountants charging clients automatically unless they object.

The sale of policies is not regulated in any way. Mr Maas said: "The client has to take the policy on trust from the accountant. What will happen if the insurer won't pay out is that the client will turn on his accountant and say: 'I'm not paying your fee'."

The Inland Revenue expressed concern over the claims made in some brochures. It said: "There are not going to be significantly more investigations under self-assessment. It is rubbish to say that every business is likely to be investigated. There will be a code of practice for investigations which will make it clearer what is going and give people more certainty."

Random investigations would not start until 1998, the Revenue added.

Roy Murray, of Professional Fee Protection, said: "The Revenue would say that wouldn't they? Kenneth Clarke announced another 2,000 investigators in last November's Budget. Only someone who had their head in the sand would think there would be fewer investigations."

The cost of cover depends on how the policy is set up. Many accountants pay insurers for all their clients to be covered and then sell the cover on, as premiums of between about



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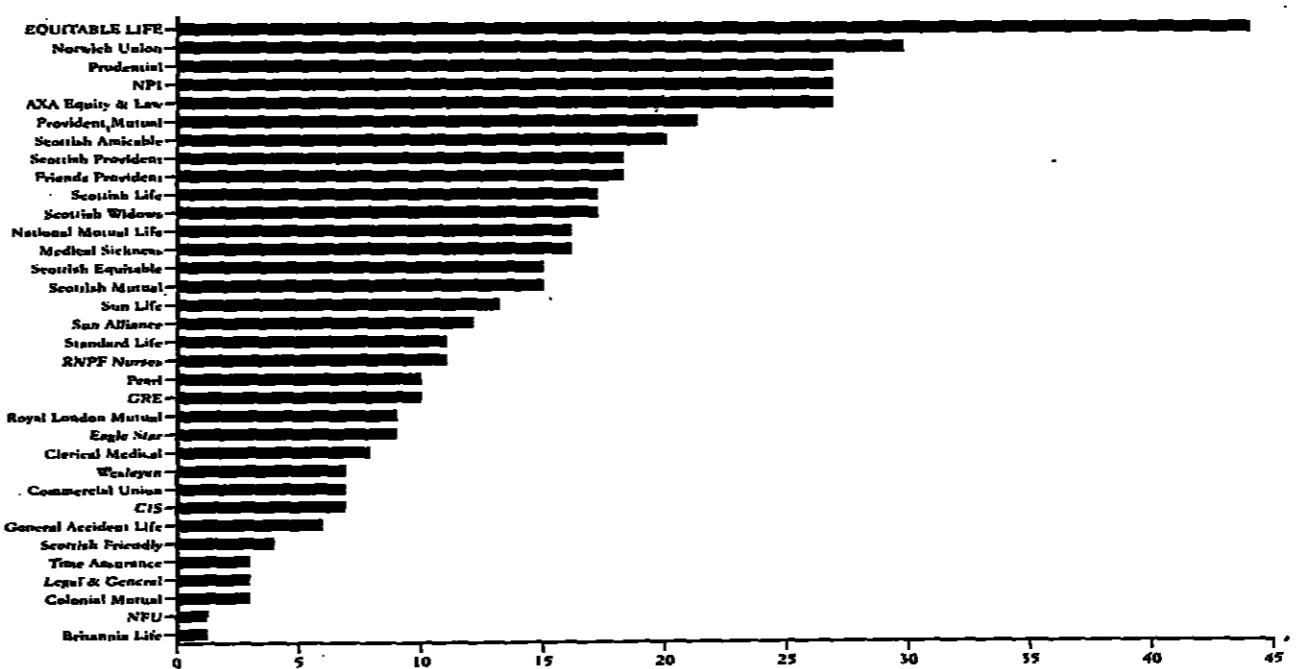
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SECTOR IN FOCUS 97

Forecasting in the run-up to a general election is a dangerous business. Consensus among fund managers and professional pundits tends to fly out of the window, leaving investors in the dark about which way to jump.

In the gloom and doom corner, Oxford Economic Forecasting, for example, says that sterling's strength threatens to damage economic recovery in 1997 as exports become relatively less competitive. Growth in export volumes of goods was a healthy 8.4 per cent last year, but Oxford Economic Forecasting believes that strong sterling will put a lid on further growth.

Similarly, Roger Bootle, chief economist of HSBC and an economic adviser to Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, is fearful for 1997's prospects if expected interest rate rises are pushed through. The rises intended to prevent inflationary consumer spending running out of control, will help to bolster sterling, he argues, further weakening British industry's competitiveness abroad.

However, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) is

more optimistic, forecasting consumer spending growth of more than 4 per cent this year, reflecting tax cuts and an increase in confidence now that house prices are on the up again. Gross domestic product growth is forecast at a more modest 3.1 per cent. The CBI believes that interest rates are unlikely to rise beyond 7 per

cent this year because the economy is growing steadily, not booming.

The fund management industry is broadly optimistic, too, no matter which party wins the election. Roger Cornick, deputy chairman of Perpetual, the fund manager with £7 billion under management, says: "The continuation

of a low-growth, low-inflation, low-interest rate environment is ideal for equity investment."

Douglas Godden, head of the CBI's economic policy group, points out that both parties have similar macroeconomic policies anyway, given that they are both committed, in theory, to economic convergence with fellow European economies.

The City is assuming a Labour victory and many commentators believe this eventuality is already priced into the market. But investors should still steel themselves for a last-minute election panic as a notoriously skittish City throws rational thinking to the wind.

A Labour government may use tax policy to shift corporate activity away from dividend distribution towards investment. This may affect investors' income in the short term, but some commentators believe that long-term growth prospects would improve as a result.

Bill Mott, head of UK Equities for Credit Suisse Asset Management, thinks a Labour government's emphasis on re-investment and training would benefit companies that grow organically on the strength of the products they develop.

For this reason, he likes biotechnology companies, such as British Biotech and Cellect, over the long term. Notoriously volatile and profitably in the short term, they still offer excellent growth prospects. Using the same reasoning, he also likes pharmaceuticals, computer software, telecoms and technology-driven engineering companies.

He says: "I like companies which produce things that people need, rather than things which people want."

He believes that the rationalisation, cost-cutting and drive for improved efficiency that has characterised much of the Conservative period in office, must give way to a sustained period of increased investment in research and development.

"The UK economy is crying out for a good dose of long-termism," he says.

There are some general trends likely to emerge in spite of the electoral uncertainty. Small to medium-sized companies traditionally outperform their bigger counterparts during economic recoveries. The latest NatWest Quarterly Survey shows small businesses reporting the best economic conditions for six years, with interest rates remaining manageable and sales picking up.

Lewis McNaught, director of the UK retail division of Garmentore, the fund manager owned by NatWest bank, says: "We love smaller companies at the moment, especially those which derive most of their earnings from the UK market rather than overseas. Service industries, such as Michael Page, the recruitment consultant, should continue to do well in 1997."

Vivian Batalge, managing director of M&G Investment Management, is also a smaller companies fan. He says: "The small to medium-sized companies are likely to outpace the FTSE 100 this year, for the first time since 1994. We are expecting 8 per cent dividend growth for the whole market in 1997, but it will

12 per cent for medium companies and 15 to 17 per cent for small companies."

Among big companies, the utilities still look good value, he believes, in spite of the threat of the windfall tax if Labour wins power. And diversified industrials, such as BTR, also look good value after a difficult period of adjustment in a low-growth environment.

However, Mr Batalge's favourite sector is manufacturing, which should enjoy sustained growth on the back of the consumer recovery, provided sterling's strength does not lead to a flood of cheap imports. Paper, packaging and printing businesses in particular are overdue good times, with Recam a favoured stock.

Over the long term, with both political parties acknowledging that an ageing population will put more and more strain on the State, companies positioned to benefit from increased self-provision, whether in healthcare pensions, should do well. Fund management groups and life insurance companies should therefore have a part to play in investors' portfolios.

Food companies are widely regarded as safe bolt-holes in times of political uncertainty. This fact alone should help to push up the price of their shares. Asda, of which Archie Norman is chairman, is a popular stock in the sector.

John Shelley, head of UK market leaders at Abraxas, the fund manager, expects 1997 to see an influx of foreign investment, particularly from the US. The fact that Lehman Brothers, the US investment bank, recently increased its investment weighting in European markets to 44 per cent seems to bear out his prediction.

He agrees with Mr Batalge that medium-sized companies, with market capitalisations of between £30 million and £2 billion, should outperform the big boys.

Abstract favours "quality" retailers, such as Dixons, Next, and DFS Furniture, and "pure" leisure stocks, such as London Clubs, the casino operator, and Manchester United, the football club, in spite of its recent share price dip.

Surford, the commercial property developer, and other property-related stocks should do well, Mr Shelley believes, on the back of the recovery.

Whether the surge in house prices will have a knock-on effect on the house-building and building-materials companies is uncertain, with some analysts dismissing growth prospects as very short term.

The wide range of opinions cited above may tempt investors to sit tight and think towards the long term. Trying to call the market over the coming months could be riskier than playing Russian roulette. Sometimes doing nothing can be the best tactic of all.

Small is beautiful for fund managers in times of political uncertainty, Matthew Wall reports

Election casts shadow over shares



Food companies, such as Asda, of which Archie Norman is chairman, are widely regarded as safe bolt-holes

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Bonuses and performance of markets don't add up

Gavin Lumsden on the reason for poor payouts from life companies

Millions of with-profit policyholders are once again left wondering what the stock markets have to do for life companies to pay out decent bonuses on their with-profit endowment policies.

1996 was not a bad year for equities, property or bonds, three sectors in which all with-profit funds invest. Broadly speaking most with-profit funds achieved a total pre-tax return of 11 per cent from their investments. And yet the four companies which have declared so far — Commercial Union, Friends Provident, General Accident and Norwich Union — are all paying top up bonuses well short of this. Sources within the industry blame the poor payouts on the prudence of actuaries who are attempting to claw back the excessive bonuses of the 1980s.

Norwich Union disappointed its 2.1 million with-profit policyholders by keeping its bonuses for unitised contracts at 6.5 per cent for savings and 7.5 per cent for pensions. Its rates for conventional policies stayed at a miserly 2.5 per cent for the sum assured and 4.5 per cent for attaching bonuses.

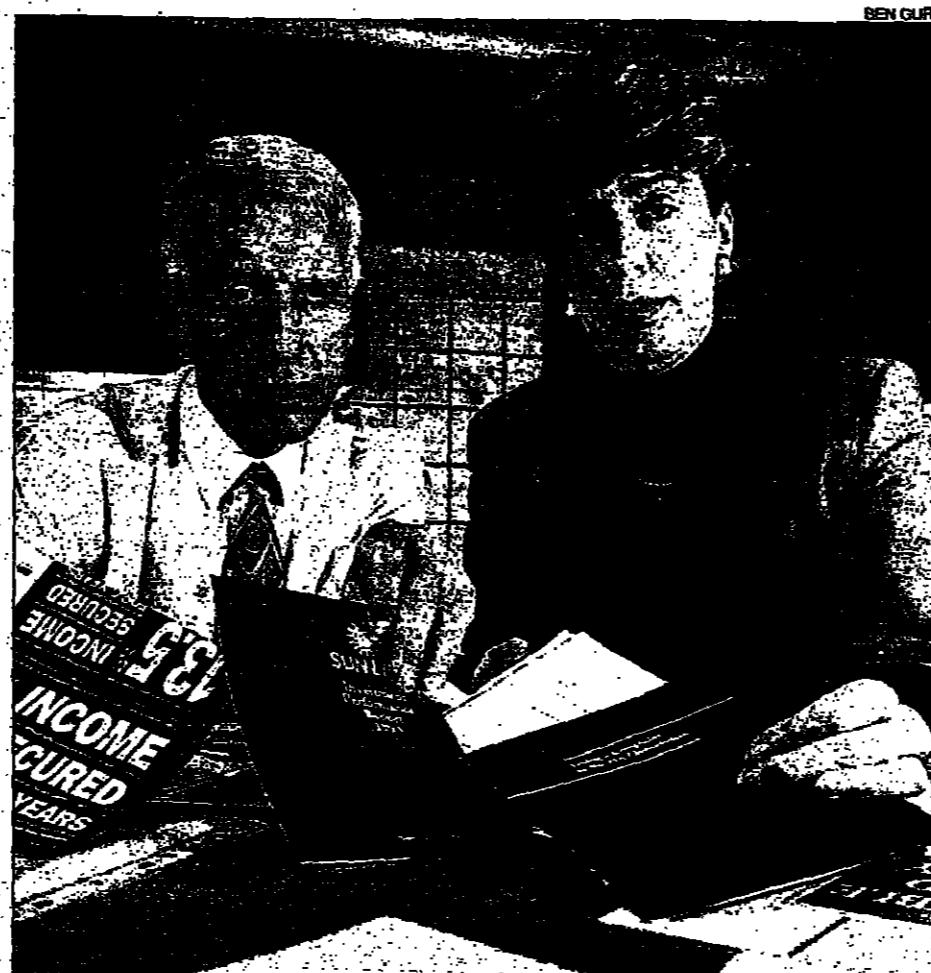
Commercial Union and Friends Provident paid slightly better. Ironically, General Accident, which shaved between 0.25 per cent and 0.5 per cent off

last year's bonuses, remains the biggest payer. Unitised savings contracts got 7.25 per cent and unitised pensions received 8.5 per cent. But GA admits that it is paying 5 to 10 per cent more than the underlying performance of its investments would dictate.

Richard Harvey, Norwich Union's finance director, dismisses as "completely ludicrous" speculation that the company is fattening itself up ahead of flotation this year at the expense of with-profit holders. "No, corporate arrangement would be recommended by our independent actuary or approved by the DTI (Department of Trade and Industry) if it had any damaging effect on our with-profit holders," he says.

Mr Harvey denies the company is out of line with its competitors: "We are paying nearly £900 million in matures. We are very careful to pay a fair amount in accordance with how the investments have done. The payout on our ten-year policies is almost identical with Friends Provident, within a few pounds."

Members of mutual insurer Scottish Amicable will doubtless be watching hawk-eyed how it sets its rates after its link-up this week with Swiss Re. It plans to demutualise this year and float in three to



Peter and Elizabeth Parsons. He claims he was misled and lost nearly £12,000

five years. However, it has promised to pay with-profit holders a special bonus of around £75 million this year, followed by further benefits worth another £200 million when it lists on the Stock Exchange (see page 39).

Holders of with-profit policies have every right to scrutinise the annual bonuses because, once announced, they become part of the guaranteed sum they will get at the end of the contract.

Bitter experience of falling rates this decade has taught many holders to be extra vigilant. Although the stock market has grown most years during the 1990s, low inflation and declining interest rates have contributed to a low-growth environment which has halved the total return

from investments compared to the boom time of the 1980s. Bonus rates have fallen from more than 10 per cent at the beginning of the decade, forcing endowment holders to increase their premiums if they want to pay off mortgages, or accept lower returns on their investment bonds.

Yet with yields from with-profit funds levelling at around 7.5 per cent life companies say cautious investors are piling back into with-profit bonds in their anxiety to smooth what could be a rocky couple of years for stock markets.

However, the controversy of falling rates refuses to go away for those investors who were sold high-income-yielding with-profit products in the early 1990s.

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The other high street banks offer higher rates of interest on their accounts. For instance, Barclays customers will have to pay an annual interest of 18.8 per cent on an authorised overdraft plus a 65p per month fee. NatWest customers, meanwhile, will have to pay interest of 18.9 per cent plus 19 per month.

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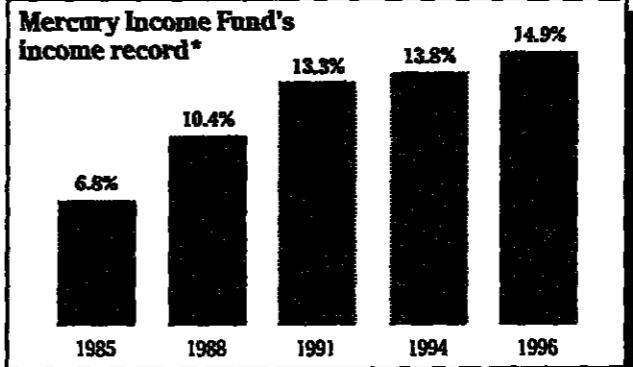
The company claims it was always clear that capital was never guaranteed. In addition, it says, it warned him every year that bonus rates were declining. It still believes Mr Parsons got a better deal than if he had put the money in a building society.

All this enrages Mr Parsons: "I'm retired and I'm looking after my money. I'm not a clever sort of person, but I do know my figures and my percentages. When I got my first set of accounts in 1992 I saw that it was never going to make it in five years. I rang up to inquire but never got an answer. Then you think it will improve and make it up later.

"If you get legitimately turned over you'd say fair enough — but when the market over the five years was very good it really makes you angry. Then they say 'I've done better than if I'd been in a building society. But I know I could have made £84,250 from deposit accounts, £6,000 more than I got in total from Sun Life — and I could have taken my money out.'

Mr Parsons has now complained to the Personal Investment Authority Ombudsman.

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From the Rev W. R. Blow
Sir, I received a disturbing document in the post recently that purported to be a Masterloan Statement. The statement, headed "Below is your account status with Masterloan", shows me to be in debt to the extent of £9,728.80 to it for an alleged £5,000 loan. This, however, is totally untrue. I owe nothing; I have never applied for, nor received, a cash loan from Barclaycard/Barclayloan.

I consider it very threatening and unworthy to receive fictitious claims of indebtedness of this sort. Such a "statement" must be even more frightening to those (perhaps elderly) who are not so certain in their minds of their financial position.

I should state that I do hold a Barclaycard, which I use. Normally, the whole outstanding amount is paid off each month.

Towards the bottom of the so-called "statement" there is a note: "This is not a bill. Send no money now". This, while being temporarily reassuring,



tends to imply that money will have to be paid in the future and that the addressee is committed to taking a loan. Without a phrase such as "Until you request a loan you are under no obligation to Barclayloan", the whole exercise looks like a very unpleasant attempt to intimidate and demand money from those who are not very certain about their financial matters.

Perhaps Barclaycard/Barclayloan has legally covered

Tax returns

From Mr C. Timms
Sir. With reference to Susan Singleton's letter (January 11) on the subject of self-assessment, although the principle that taxpayers will not need to calculate their own tax bills following timorous submission of their returns is appreciated, achieving this result by way of assistance from the Inland Revenue is not always to be recommended as, in my experience as a practising accountant, HM Inspector of Taxes does not usually get it right first time, often resulting in tax liabilities being overstated.

Although requesting the assistance of professionals is not essential and remains a matter of personal choice, individuals who engage the services of a qualified accountant can rest assured that they pay the correct amount of tax and not a penny more than is properly due. Furthermore, receipt of independent professional advice can often result in the reduction of taxes due.

Yours faithfully,
CHRISTOPHER TIMMS.
Easterbrook, Eaton & Co.
Old Fore Street,
Sidmouth, Devon.

Who takes the risk in derivative trading?

From Mr Bruce T. Brown
Sir, May I be among the first to compliment your editorial team on its reports (January 11) on the Abbey National equity-linked Tessa and high income bonds.

I repeatedly ask: "Why the sudden rash of derivative-based equity-linked savings and investment products?"

My cynicism tells me that they provide a clever mechanism for the institutions to pass the "risk" of derivatives

The Woolwich float and disqualified investors

From Mr Paul N. Boddam-Whetham
Sir, Having read details of the proposed transfer arrangements of the Woolwich Building Society to Woolwich plc, and as a "disqualified" investor having received the notice about the statutory cash bonus, I have written to John Stewart, chief executive, to highlight the following points:

1. There is an undisclosed number of long-term investors who regrettably had allowed their accounts to drop below £100 at the first reference date of December 31, 1995.
2. A survey of more than 40 such investors revealed that their average time with the society exceeded 12 years.
3. If all "disqualified" investors were to be included in the allocation of shares, the average cash equivalent bonus would be reduced only by £19, from £152 to £133, assuming a pessimistic estimate of 40,000 "disqualified" investors. Fewer "disqualified" members mean the reduction would be even less.
4. Members should be given the opportunity at the special meeting on February 11 to resolve that members with less than £100 in a qualifying investment account at December 31, 1995, but who have held such accounts for more than two years, ie, since December 31, 1993, should be included in the

basic distribution of shares. S. "Disqualified" members who have kept up their accounts to £100 at December 1996 are eligible to vote, but are neither to receive shares nor the statutory cash bonus. They thus lose out twice (even though the statutory cash bonus is likely to be less than £10).

6. The Woolwich is lobbying to amend sections of the Building Societies Bill, asserting that if it had known of certain measures, it would have taken alternative action. If long-term members had known of the rules about the qualifying criteria, they too would have taken alternative action. They too are lobbying for a change to the rules.

7. The society is being inconsistent in its recent reminders for investors to top up accounts to the £100 level, without being prepared to treat with fairness those "disqualified" long-term investors whose balances had temporarily fallen.

The Woolwich Action Campaign is seeking fair treatment for loyal Woolwich members by highlighting these anomalies and contradictions in the actions of the society.

Yours sincerely,
PAUL N.
BODDAM-WHETHAM,
Highway,
32 Upper Hall Park,
Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire.

Letters or information for Weekend Money may be sent by fax to 0171-782 5082. Letters should include a daytime telephone number. The Times regrets it cannot always give individual replies or advice and asks that original documents are not sent in. No legal responsibility can be accepted for advice or statements in these columns and independent professional advice should be sought.

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Abbey National Instant Saver	2.30%	2.75%	3.15%	3.65%
Halifax Liquid Gold	2.45%	2.95%	3.25%	3.50%
Woolwich Prime Gold	2.00%	2.25%	3.00%	3.50%

Source: Moneyfacts 24th January 1997

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* Gross. The annual rate of interest paid without deduction of tax less fee to obtain one per annum.
** Gross CAR (Committed Annual Rate). This is the gross rate indicated to show the annual rate effectively received by a customer if interest is applied during a year remained in account and no interest is deducted at the end of the year.
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www.nrock.co.uk
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Rates are correct at 11.1.97 but may vary. The circumstances in which the rates may vary are described in our Select Account's Terms and Conditions and Change leaflet. It is important to note that Northern Rock Building Society's Select Account will not receive capital gains tax relief if the Society receives a gain on the sale of the account. The Society will not receive a tax relief on the deduction of income tax at the lower rate (currently 20%) or, subject to the required conditions, gross interest. There will be no tax relief on the interest if the Society receives a gain on the sale of the account. The Society will not receive a tax relief on the deduction of income tax at the lower rate (currently 20%) or, subject to the required conditions, gross interest. There will be no tax relief on the interest if the Society receives a gain on the sale of the account. 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THE TIMES MONEY INFORMATION SERVICE

How to plan an active retirement

THE Good Non-Retirement Guide strips away the mystique of financial planning and suggests ways to ensure greater security for yourself in retirement. Topics covered include pensions, tax, investment, starting your own business, and voluntary work. It also explains the range of benefits to which you are entitled and how to find the right financial adviser. The guide, written by Rosemary Brown, is published next Thursday, priced £4.99.

Birmingham Midshires Building Society has increased savings rates by an average of 0.34 per cent. Young savers with balances of more than £25 in the society's children's account, Smartstart, will benefit the most with a return of 5.80 per cent, a rise of 0.80 per cent. The Quantum High Interest 60-day notice account rates increase by up to 0.25 per cent (annual) and 0.24 per cent (monthly). The minimum opening balance on the Quantum High Interest account has risen sharply to £5,000 from £1,000 and First Class Instant Access to £10,000 from £1,000.

Hinton & Wild, the independent financial adviser, has announced the launch of a

new mortgage/annuity scheme in conjunction with Kent Reliance Building Society that will help elderly homeowners to increase their income. Mortgage funds on an "interest only" basis will be made available by Kent Reliance. The interest rate on the loan is fixed for life at 9 per cent per annum. The plan is open to homeowners aged 69 or over and couples need to have a minimum joint age of 45 years. A free leaflet is available from Hinton & Wild Limited, 374/378 Ewell Road, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 7BB.

The fifteenth edition of Chase de Vere's Pegguide looks into the second decade of personal equity plan (Pep) investing. The guide includes a full analysis of most of the Peps currently on the market plus a detailed comparison of the features of each individual Pep. The price of the guide is £12.95, which includes the updated July Performance Charts that will be mailed to subscribers on publication. Chase de Vere will refund the purchase price of the Pegguide to any investor taking out a Pep through them. Call 0800 526 092 for a copy.

LIZZANNE ROSE

GUARANTEED INCOME BONDS

ANNUAL INCOME

Rates as at January 16, 1997

Investment (£)	Company	Standard Rate (%)
1 Year		
5,000	AIG Life	5.40
10,000	AIG Life	5.60
20,000	AIG Life	5.75
50,000	AIG Life	5.90
2 Years		
1,000	Hambo Assured	5.25
3,000	ITL London & Edin	6.20
3 Years		
1,000	Hambo Assured	5.60
3,000	ITL London & Edin	6.20
20,000	Hambo Assured	6.35
4 Years		
1,000	Hambo Assured	6.00
3,000	ITL London & Edin	6.25
10,000	Hambo Assured	6.55
20,000	Hambo Assured	6.65
5 Years		
1,000	Hambo Assured	6.05
3,000	ITL London & Edin	6.70

Source: Chamberlain de Broe 0171-434 4222. Net rates, income and capital guaranteed. Early surrender. Terms vary. Monthly income may be available.

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INSTANT ACCESS ACCOUNTS

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Bristol & West BS 0800 901109

Bullion Inst by Post

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Postal Inst Postal

Instant £250, 4.80 1/4%Y

£1,000 6.00 1/4%Y

£5,000 6.25 1/4%Y

£25,000 6.35 1/4%Y

20 day p £5,000 6.05 1/4%Y

30 day p £25,000 6.30 1/4%Y

60 day p £10,000 6.50 1/4%Y

Postal Bonus 30.48p £10,000 7.00 OM

20 day p £5,000 6.05 1/4%Y

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60 day p £10,000 6.50 1/4%Y

Postal Bonus 30.48p £10,000 7.00 OM

Interest paid

Our Economics Editor on a popular government security

Safety through the ages

ECONOMICS EXPLAINED 3 GILTS

Gilts are securities issued by the Government when it needs to borrow money. Short for " gilt-edged securities", they were so named in the 19th century because they were regarded as the safest form of investment. In bald terms, the gilt investor lends the Government money in return for interest.

This is by far the most important way the Government finances its deficit. By the 1990s, over £150 billion of gilts were in issue, accounting for more than 60 per cent of the outstanding national debt.

■ History lesson. The national debt came into being in 1694 when William III had to raise £1.2 million to finance war with France. The financiers who raised the money were given a charter to form a bank. It became the Bank of England.

■ What a gilt gives you. You get a certificate that entitles you to a fixed flow of interest income over a fixed period, at the end of which you get a fixed capital repayment. Each gilt has its own name, which gives you much of the information you need. Take, as an example, £1,000 nominal of 8½ per cent Treasury Loan 2007. The £1,000 nominal is the amount of a gilt. This is the capital repayment you receive when it matures. The 8½ per cent is the coupon or rate of interest the Government will pay. The 2007 is the maturity date when the Government repays the capital.

Treasury loan is simply the name given to a particular gilt. Others are called Exchequer Loan, War Loan or Consolidated Stock. Professional traders in the gilt market sometimes give gilts nicknames. Two issues of gilts maturing in the year 2000 were called Grecian after Grecian 2000, the famous haircut product. The 13 per cent 2000 issue was the Big Greek, the 9 per cent 2000 issue the Baby Greek. One index-linked gilt, issued just before one of the elections of Margaret Thatcher's reign and convertible into a conventional gilt after the election, was called a Maggie May.

■ Conventional versus index-linked. The conventional gilt was described above. An index-linked gilt differs in that both the interest payments throughout the life of the stock and the amount payable when it matures are adjusted in line with the British inflation rate. Index-linked gilts, which were dreamt up to give investors some protection against rising inflation, came into being after Sir Geoffrey Howe's 1981 Budget speech. To start with they were restricted to institutions such as pension funds, but in 1982 they were made available to everyone.

■ Prices and yields. The price of a gilt is what you would pay in the market to buy



Messengers sprint from the Bank of England with news of a rate change

one and how much you would get if you sold the stock rather than wait for the capital repayment on maturity. The best way to track gilt prices is in newspaper listings. A price of £99½ — rather anachronistically, gilts are still priced in thirty-second — means that for every £100 nominal of stock, the price in the market is £99½ or £99.31p.

The yield is the way you measure the return on your investment. It differs from the coupon because it is an interest rate based on the actual price of the stock, not the nominal amount. One of the most confusing features of the gilt market is that, when prices rise, yields fall, and vice versa. Take an 8½ per cent stock whose price is quoted at £99½. That means that you only have to pay £99.31p to get 8½ per cent interest, and a £100 capital repayment. In this case, the yield is 8.56 per cent. Separately, the newspapers quote redemption yields. This is the total return from buying a gilt including the flow of interest and the capital gain or loss from holding the gilt until maturity.

■ What moves gilt prices? Two big influences on a gilt price are the likely level of general interest rates and

prospects for inflation. A coupon fixed at 10 per cent may look stingy when bank interest rates are at 15 per cent, but generous when bank rates are down at 6 per cent. The behaviour of inflation is important because higher prices would eat into your return on a security that offers a fixed interest rate.

■ How to buy and sell gilts. There are two main methods. You can buy direct from the Bank of England when new stock is issued, generally through a gilt auction. Or you can buy from the market through your bank or stockbroker or the National Savings Stock Register.

■ Further information. For general advice and a leaflet *Investing in Gilts: A guide for the small investor* contact the Bank of England, Threadneedle Street, London EC2R 8AH; tel 0171-601 4940. For buying gilts through the NSRS, contact the Department for National Savings, Blackpool FY3 9YP; tel 01253 697333. For a list of stockbrokers, contact the London Stock Exchange, Old Broad Street, London EC2N 1HP; tel 0171-797 1000.

JANET BUSH

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1 year	3 years	5 years	10 years	
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Average Income Fund	10141	12151	20156	32188
PEP	487	279	275	355

CALL 0800 212 274

*Source: Merton, offer-to-bid, net income reinvested, UK Equity Income Sector. All figures to 2.12.96. 1% discount only applies to lump sum PEP investments until 1.5.97. Past performance is no guide to the future. The price of units and the income from them may go down as well as up and you may not get back the amount originally invested. PEP legislation can change at any time and the value of tax concessions will depend on individual circumstances. The GT PEP is managed by GT Global Investment Funds Ltd, regulated by IMRO and the Personal Investment Authority. The GT Income Fund was launched in September 1973 and is managed by GT Global Fund Management Ltd (part of the LOT Group) which is regulated by IMRO and is a member of AUTIF. Issued by GT Global Investment Funds Ltd.

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All we ask is that you don't make more than three withdrawals in each calendar year.

You can choose to have your interest paid annually or monthly (we'll keep you up to date with a statement every six months).

And you've the convenience of an account operated by first class post.

This is strictly a limited issue, however. So invest now with £10,000 or more.

For details, call us free from 9 to 5 weekdays or 10 to 3 weekends (you can leave a message at other times) 0500 50 5000

YIELDS FROM 20/1/97			
UP TO 7.05% GROSS			
AMOUNT YOU INVEST	ANNUAL % GROSS	ANNUAL % NET	MONTHLY % GROSS
£100,000+	7.05	5.64	6.80
£50,000+	6.70	5.36	6.45
£25,000+	6.60	5.28	6.35
£10,000+	6.50	5.20	6.25

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Losing run casts shadow over coach's arrival while Scotland seek to reinforce home rule

Ashton driven by need to change luck of the Irish

FROM DAVID HANDS, RUGBY CORRESPONDENT, IN DUBLIN

BRIAN ASHTON may possess the look of a leprechaun, but it may be too much to ask the former Bath coach to conjure some of the magical properties attributed to Ireland's mythical little men. In any event, Ireland felt sufficiently confident in their preparations for the rugby union five nations championship match with France at Lansdowne Road today to cancel their light training yesterday and opt instead for relaxation.

That was in marked contrast to their opponents, who travelled from Paris after losing the services of Richard Dourthe. The Dax centre was knocked out during training on Thursday and his place goes to Stephane Glas, which could act in France's favour. Glas is a talented performer and less prone than Dourthe to fits of temperment that have cost penalties in the past and, after the meeting with England last year, led to a suspension for kicking Ben Clarke.

However, Dourthe is also the team's goalkicker; and he scored four out of five attempts against South Africa last month in a team that also included Christophe La-

maison, the long-range kicking exponent. Those duties will now be shared between Thomas Castaignede and Alain Penuel, both of them accomplished marksmen on their day yet both returning to the international arena after a period of absence.

Yet it is not in the area of goalkicking, significant though that is, that Ireland

have failed to make the most of their opportunities. Those duties have been emphasised all week the need to keep the ball in hand and it is impossible to believe that their midfield cannot create enough opportunities out of the damp Dublin air to give them their thirteenth successive win against Ireland. Unless, of course, Ashton has distilled sufficient drive into the Ireland forwards to deny France the opportunities they seek.

"I have tried to build the confidence of the players, after the poor results of the previous three games, and provide a framework of the game with which they feel comfortable," Ashton, who only joined his charges in Limerick last weekend, said.

The quality of the set-piece game has to be paramount but there are forwards who can run, handle and cause the opponent problems," Ashton said.

The framework must give the players options and I have tried to get over the message of personal responsibility on the field, not just relying on one or two players to dictate the course of the game. It's a simple formula but it does allow flexibility and it is designed specifically to play against France.

"There are certain things one can expect the French to do well but, though they have all-round strength, they will only do some of those things well if we let them."

The whole mood of the squad has been upbeat and positive this week. This is about Ireland, not about France, and focusing on what Irish players do well: we have no new caps, all of them have been there before and know what they have to do.

"If the players have any misgivings, then they are hiding them well. I have found them very supportive and enthusiastic, they have worked hard and I hope we have established a positive relationship.

"It's taken them 3½ days to get to where I wanted them to be and at times I thought we weren't going to make it — but the proof of the pudding will be on Saturday."

Under the coaching of Murray Kidd, Ireland lived in the shadow of defeat, though many will feel that was more the fault of the playing structure than of Kidd. The New Zealander who was dismissed in the wake of the defeat by Italy earlier this month.

Yet France, too, have to establish their credentials after losing both their away championship matches, in Scotland and Wales, last season. Their success in European club competition suggests that they remain as competitive as ever but now the national strings must be drawn tighter together.

To demean the competition

that begins today in the light of these failures is hardly a point worth making to the participants and the many millions who will be enthralled by the events of the next ten weeks. Take them for what they are: moments of happy, sporting celebration. Over the years in this fixture Scotland and Wales have offered examples of the best that rugby can supply. It is hard to recall an indifferent match.

Of late, Scotland have had much the better record. They have won five of the past seven fixtures and if they succeed today will emulate what they achieved between 1989 and 1991, when they won on three successive occasions. Wales have to look back to 1983 for their Murrayfield victory.



Ellis, Scotland's new hooker, the first player from Currie to be capped, practises his lineout throwing

Wales attempting to turn back powerful tide of recent history

BY GERALD DAVIES

AMID so much that is changing in rugby union, certain of its old virtues thankfully remain the same. The five nations' championship, so recently threatened with dismantlement, begins for Scotland and Wales in Edinburgh this afternoon and those who govern the future of the sport, and who very nearly tore the championship apart, need to take heed of the people, who are voting with their feet.

It is not hard to believe from the way Princes Street is ablaze with red and white that there are more Welsh people willing to part with their savings for the trip northwards than were willing to take the much shorter journey to Cardiff last weekend to see their team play the United States.

In contrast to the 13,500 who were at the Arms Park, it is believed that between 15,000 and 20,000 have arrived by air, road and rail in Scotland over the past few days, and the mobile phones have been busily engaged by those searching for the spare tickets. The attraction of rugby's traditional deep mid-winter fare.

The argument is constantly made that the standard of play in the northern hemisphere tournament cannot hold a candle to that achieved by those countries south of the equator. Evidence of this was provided by Australia's wins over Scotland and Wales and Wales' additional loss to South Africa last month.

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against national teams in the last 12 months.

The difference lies in that Scotland invariably pull off all the stops in the five nations' while Wales, on the other hand, rarely fulfil their potential. Having entered the last two championships with little hope, Scotland ended up competing for the grand slam.

"Scotland have an enviable history," Terry Cobner, the Wales director of rugby, says "to play to their maximum capacity. The performance of the team is greater than the sum of the individual parts."

Some of those parts have changed since the Italy game. In addition to the late inclusion of Graham Ellis as hooker for the injured Kevin McKenzie, there are four other changes. Two of these can certainly be said to strengthen the team. Rob Wainwright returns as No 8 and captain, while Gary Armstrong resumes at scrum half instead of Bryan Redpath. The latter adds recognisable strength to a familiar and experienced back division.

Wales keep faith with the team that was originally chosen to play the US Eagles. Having missed that match, Jonathan Humphreys regains his place at hooker and captain and Neil Jenkins returns to the unfamiliarity of the full back position.

Wales are perceived to hold the key to the tight phases, but the question is whether they will be swift enough thereafter to match Scotland for pace in the loose, where the home team always seem to thrive on Murrayfield's firm surface.

Leicester keen to take their lead from Stransky

BY CHRISTOPHER IRVINE

DOMESTIC arguments this weekend in England — where foreign imports have forced down the number of English-born players in the Courage Club Championship first division by a fifth since last season — retain a cosmopolitan flavour. Joel Stransky, the former South Africa stand-off half, makes his home debut for Leicester, in place of Rob Riley, against Bristol today.

Stransky's arrival at Welford Road leaves just four English players in the regular

No 10 position among the 12

first division sides. Lack of

alternatives is a problem, but

the concerns of the England

team management are not

those of Leicester as they set

about regaining the lead, on

points difference, from an

inactive Wasps side.

Leicester also give a full

league debut to Perry Freshwater, a former New Zealand

Colt, who takes over from

Graham Rowntree in the front

row. Rowntree has a calf

injury, but Neil Back, his

England colleague, has recovered

from a hand injury. Roy Underwood is on the right wing for only the third time on his 22nd Leicester appearance, with Leon Lloyd preffered on the left.

Should Bristol lose, they

would equal their worst run of

seven league defeats and deepen

their plight at the foot of the

table. Paul Burke and David Corkery are on Ireland duty

and while Simon Shaw's back

problem has cleared up, their

main hope must be that

Leicester will have their minds

on the Heineken Cup final

against Brive, the French club,

next Saturday.

Leicester's probable retrieval

of the lead might last just 24

hours. Harlequins, gathering

momentum once more, will

resume the front-running to-

morrow if they can end Saracens' unbeaten record at

Enfield. Paddy Johns and

Richard Wallace, who repre-

sented Ireland A yesterday,

are due back from Dublin to

play for Saracens.

Even if they appear to be out

of the title race, Bath and Andy

Robinson, their new coach,

who takes his place in a

reshuffled pack, urgently need

a win at the Recreation

Ground tomorrow.

Northampton inflicted one

of the holders' four defeats,

but are without four players

on five nations' duty and have

additional problems up front,

with Gavin Walsh injured and

Tim Rodber and Matt Voland

having late checks.

If rumour about two, rather

than four sides, going down to

the second division becomes

fact, West Hartlepool have

everything to play for today at

Gloucester. However, Orrell

appear to be condemned and,

in a dress-rehearsal for their

Pilkington Cup meeting next

Saturday, they entertain Sale,

whose main danger is from not

having played for four weeks.

□ Martin Bayfield, the Eng-

land and British Isles lock

forward, begins his comeback

today from a chronic pelvic injury, in

a second XV game for North-

ampton at home to Bath United.

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5 NATIONS CHAMPIONSHIP

HANDICAP BETTING

Wales with a 4 point start

10/11 Scotland 14/1 Draw Wales 10/11

Murrayfield, Kick-off 3.00pm, Live on BBC Scotland.

SCOTLAND WINNING MARGIN

7/2 1-5 pts 7/2

4/1 6-10 pts 6/1

6/1 11-15 pts 12/1

10/1 16-20 pts 25/1

20/1 21-25 pts 50/1

16/1 Drawn Match

HANDICAP BETTING

Ireland with a 9 point start

10/11 Ireland 14/1 Draw France 4/5

Lansdowne Road, Kick-off 3.00pm, Live on BBC TV.

IRELAND WINNING MARGIN

11/2 1-5 pts 11/2

9/1 6-10 pts 4/1

33/1 11-15 pts 4/1

33/1 16-20 pts 5/1

22/1 21-25 pts 8/1

16/1 Drawn Match

HANDICAP BETTING

Ireland with a 9 point start

10/11 Ireland 14/1 Draw France 4/5

Lansdowne Road, Kick-off 3.00pm, Live on BBC TV.

FRANCE WINNING MARGIN

11/2

MOTOR RACING: WORLD CHAMPION'S KNOWLEDGE OF SILVERSTONE EXAMINED ON FIRST DAY OF TESTING

Hill shines through darkest moments

By OLIVER HOLT

DAMON HILL might have been expecting a gentle introduction to his new car at Silverstone yesterday, but what he got was akin to a trial by ordeal. He has said many times that he could drive round the circuit with his eyes shut and last night he almost had to prove it.

By the time his new team had fixed last-minute gearbox problem on his Arrows-Yamaha, loaded the car onto a truck at their factory in Leafield, Oxfordshire, and driven to the Northamptonshire circuit, dusk had fallen over the old airfield and a thick fog was closing in.

When Hill eventually settled into the cockpit and the engine was fired up by his mechanics, he had to drive by instinct and the light of the moon, negotiating two miles of puddle-strewn track on the South Circuit at speeds approaching 200mph.

He completed one lap and was wheeled back into a marquee, intending to return to the circuit to do two more tours. But by then it was so dark that his mechanics could not see and one of them damaged the car's exhaust as they tried to restart it.

The day was over but the object was achieved and Hill was still buoyant. The serious business of testing will begin at Jerez, in southern Spain, on Monday, and this first cutting had at least passed without a hitch. The next phase of the Formula One motor racing world champion's career has begun.

"I suppose I could see about three or four car lengths out there," Hill said. "But I've been round here so many times I could probably do it at

midnight. I have raced through the night at Le Mans before but we had spotlights there."

"But we are on our way now, I was delighted with the way it went and the fact that it happened, at all just shows how professional this team is. It went perfectly really and it was good to get back in a racing car after two months away."

Everything is in place now. We had to wait today until everything was right before we went out or there would have been no point. But now we can go to Jerez ready to get down to some proper action."

Tom Walkinshaw, the Arrows team owner and the man who has forecast that Hill could win two races this season, was also pleased with the outcome after flying into the circuit by helicopter late in the afternoon. "This kind of thing is just a shake-down to make sure the wheels are turning," he said. "It is not quite as warm as it will be in Jerez but it was essential to get it done."

Photographers and camera crews had begun gathering at the circuit early yesterday morning in anticipation of Hill making a prompt start, and by the time he eventually arrived the car park at the South Circuit, usually a deserted, windswept place, was full to capacity. William Taylor, Hill's biggest fan, who was flown out to Japan by his hero to watch him win the world championship last October, was there from dawn to dusk.

Hill spent most of the day in the warmth of a hotel in Buckingham, close to the circuit, but even when he arrived, he had to film an advertisement for ITV to promote its coverage of grand prix racing, which begins this season.



Hill emerges in the darkness at Silverstone to begin his test lap of the circuit in his Arrows-Yamaha car

he had to film an advertisement for ITV to promote its coverage of grand prix racing, which begins this season.

It seems to consist of him walking towards and away from a camera along a white line painted on the track. After four or five takes, the camera crew pronounced themselves satisfied. "That bit went very

well, I thought," Hill smiled as he strode off towards his car.

After a three-day test in Spain next week, Hill will be plunged into an intensive series of tests at circuits around Europe in the run-up to the opening race of the season, the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne on March 9. His Arrows has a new engine, a

Yamaha, new Bridgestone tyres and a totally new chassis, and all the various components must be tested extensively to try to achieve reliability.

Walkinshaw is banking on the influence of Hill and the prestige at having the No 1 on one of his cars to lift the team from its performance last season,

when it won only one point. He is also hoping that the switch to Bridgestone will give Arrows an advantage over the majority of teams that are still using Goodyear tyres at up to four of the 17 races.

Despite the wait yesterday, Hill is forging into the future looking for light out of the darkness.

BASKETBALL: THREE-POINT SPECIALIST WHITE MAY HOLD KEY TO SUCCESS FOR LEOPARDS IN NATIONAL CUP FINAL

Mims aiming to make the most of his lucky break

By NICHOLAS HARLING

OF ALL the happy coincidences in sport, few can match that which has made this season the most fulfilling yet for Billy Mims. Just by happening to be in the right place at the right time when he travelled through Florida last summer, the Leopards coach may have determined the destiny of the first of this season's honours.

Should the London club win the Classic Cola National Cup final tomorrow, and be helped towards victory over Sheffield Sharks by a heroic contribution from John White, then Mims will forever bless the

moment he stopped off at a Krispy Kream doughnut shop in Port Saint Lucie.

Mims, on a recruiting drive, picked up a local newspaper and turned to the sports pages to read that in the USBL (the United States Basketball League), that very night the Treasure Coast Knights were in town to play Jacksonville Baracudas. "On taking in the game, as any conscientious coach would, Mims was immediately struck by the shooting prowess of White, whose 35 points included six three-pointers from seven attempts.

Here was a player, Mims felt, who should have been competing alongside the elite

in the National Basketball Association. "He belongs in the NBA. Some players are good enough to be in the NBA. He's one of them, but you have to be in the right place at the right time. I was; John, unfortunately for him, wasn't."

John is 30 now and it will be hard for him to get into the NBA but I would stake my house on the fact that plenty of the guys in the NBA are not as good as John. He's a better shooter, a better guard."

White remains philosophical about his failure to achieve his ambition. "I had a good camp once with Indiana Pacers," he said. "I'm not saying that I should have made it but

I came close. I was upset at the time, but I don't harp on about it. I don't feel bitter about it."

White did not take up basketball seriously until his high school days at Fairdale in Louisville, Kentucky. He went on to study communications at the University of Southern Mississippi, where he failed to find harmony on court. "The head coach blackballed me, saying that I had an unbelievable attitude."

For all that, it was at Huddersfield that White developed a talent for long-range marksmanship. "I like to take the big shots," he said. "If there's a turning point in a game that's one of my strong

points. I like to put daggers in people's hearts."

The dagger was indeed struck deep into the Sharks three weeks ago when, in the same Sheffield arena to which he returns tomorrow, White collected 33 points for Leopards in a Budweiser League fixture. The winners by nine points then, the Leopards may succeed again should White respond positively to finding himself even more of a marked man.

Just as significant, perhaps, will be the Leopards' reaction to a traumatic 32-point home defeat at the hands of London Towers on Thursday in the 7-Up Trophy.

For a big man, McMillan moves very quickly at second

FOOTBALL
Goal-3.0 unless stated
Pools coupon numbers in brackets
FA Carling Premiership
(1) Chelsea v Derby
(2) Coventry v Manchester Utd
(3) Leicester v Wimbledon
(4) Liverpool v West Ham
(5) Middlesbrough v Shrewsbury
(6) Southampton v Newcastle
(7) Sunderland v Blackburn

P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Leicester	22	10	7	20	22	37
Man Utd	22	11	8	3	42	41
Arrest	22	11	7	4	39	40
Newcastle	22	11	7	4	39	40
Wimbledon	22	11	6	3	34	38
Aston Villa	22	10	8	4	31	31
Chelsea	22	9	8	5	35	31
Sheffield Utd	22	9	7	6	31	31
Tottenham	22	8	4	9	29	28
Sunderland	22	8	4	9	29	28
Leeds	22	8	4	9	29	28
Derby	22	6	9	7	27	24
Blackburn	22	6	9	7	27	22
Coventry	22	6	9	7	27	22
Leicester	22	6	9	7	27	22
West Ham	22	5	10	7	19	26
Nottingham Forest	22	4	10	11	26	29
Southern	22	4	10	12	26	41
Leeds United	22	3	11	10	26	31
Sheffield United	22	3	11	10	26	31
Blackburn	22	3	11	10	26	31
Coventry	22	3	11	10	26	31
Leeds United	22	3	11	10	26	31
Southampton	22	3	11	10	26	31
Leeds United	22	3	11	10	26	31
Sheffield United	22	3	11	10	26	31
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Sheffield United	22	3	11	10	26	31
Blackburn	22	3	11	10	26	31
Coventry	22	3	11	10	26	31
Leeds United	22	3	11	10	26	31
Southampton	22	3	11	10	26	31
Leeds United	22	3	11	10	26	31
Sheffield United	22</td					

RACING: TATE'S TALENTED PERFORMER TO REWARD BACKERS

Ask Tom can provide right answer for Kempton chase

BY RICHARD EVANS, RACING CORRESPONDENT

SINCE the mighty Desert Orchid won the first running of the Victor Chandler Chase, at 6-4, back in the 1989, the two-mile handicap has been a bonus for punters rather than the race's sponsor — and today's renewal can maintain the tradition.

In eight runnings, only two horses outside the first three in the betting have obliged and, while that trend is no reason for excluding outsiders from calculations, there are good reasons for opposing the long shots again today. When half the field is out of the handicap.

Exposing the chinks in a horse's armour is not always popular with owners but it is important for punters in shortlisting possible winners. The much-hyped Calisso Bay is not a natural jumper of fences, and my guess is he never will be. The best of Kibreet's form last season would give him a chance, but he failed to justify odds-on favouritism in a three-runner

race behind Dancing Paddy at Cheltenham last time. The ten-year-old looks in the grip of the handicapper and is unlikely to find the necessary improvement at his age.

Dancing Paddy benefited from the small field last time and jumped better than usual. He can get rather low at some

RICHARD EVANS

Nap: ASK TOM
(3.10 Kempton Park)
Next best: Make A Stand
(2.40 Kempton Park)

fences and is likely to be found out in this more competitive event. Big Matt, the winner of this race last year when it was staged at its usual Ascot venue, has been disappointing this season and is definitely best at the Berkshire course.

The front-running Clay County, without a race for three months, is better giving

weight away to inferior rivals and may find this jump in class too much. This leaves the David Nicholson-trained pair, Viking Flagship and Storm Alert, and Ask Tom.

Interestingly, the Nicholson runners yesterday ran if in need of their outings after the freeze. Leaving that aside, I suspect the admirable Viking Flagship would appreciate more run and a little further, and may need this race after a six-week absence.

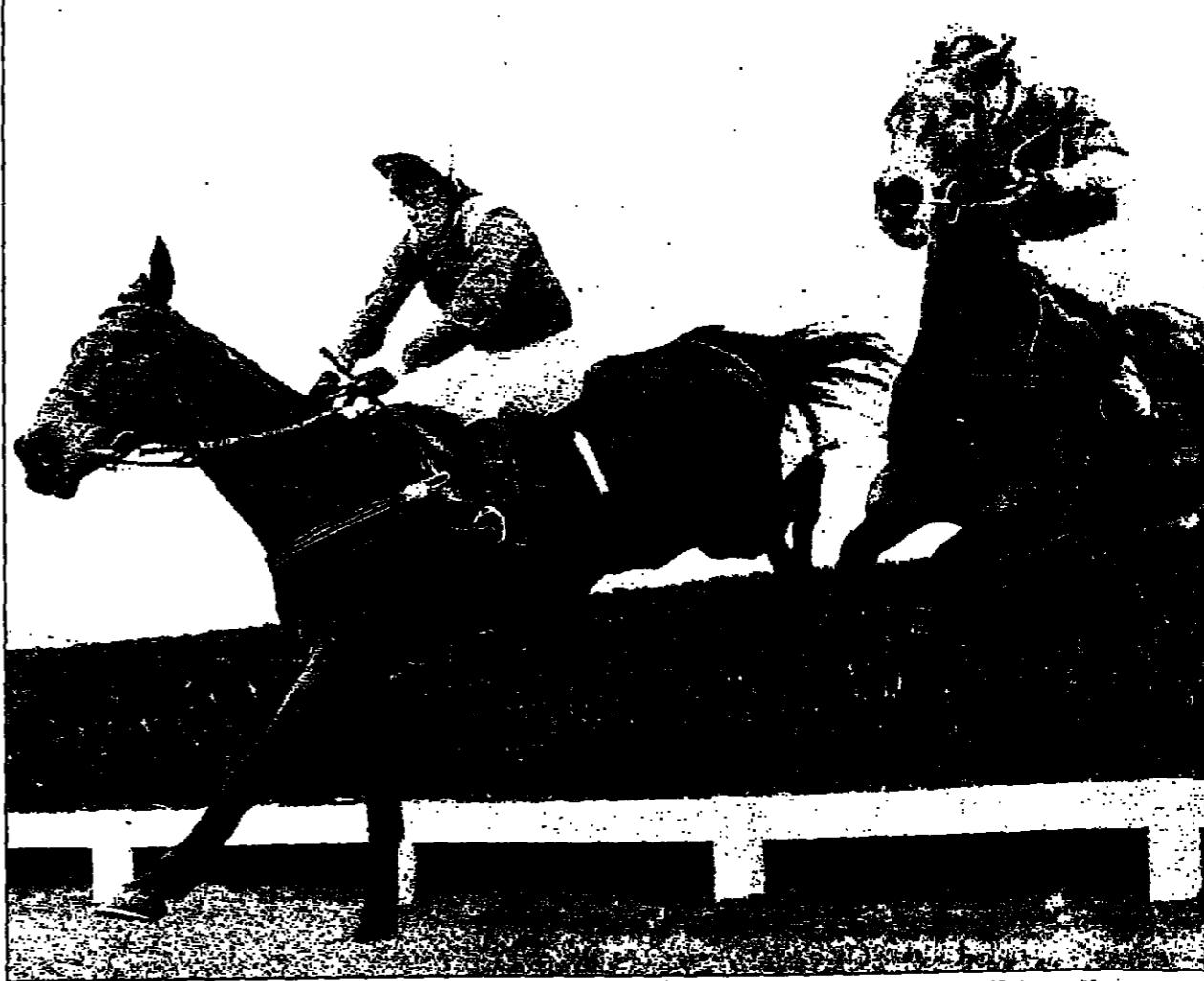
Storm Alert, an Ascot specialist, beat Ask Tom half a length at his favourite track four weeks ago and is only 1lb worse off, but I will be surprised if he can confirm the form here. Russ Garrity made the error of being slowly away on Ask Tom at Ascot and he is likely to be much nearer the pace today.

"We have not missed a day's work with him during the freeze. I have a lot of good grass gallops and I am happy with him," Tom Tate, his

trainer, said yesterday. The eight-year-old, whose only defeat over fences last season came in the Arkle when he was still suffering the effects of a virus, has "great ability" and is being aimed at the Queen Mother Champion Chase. With bags of improvement to come, Ask Tom looks a solid bet.

With a question mark against the fitness of so many runners, backers will need to exercise caution. Away from the gaze of the television cameras, it could pay to take on Ready Money Creek at Kempton (1.10) with Sea Victor, whose victory in a fast-run race at Doncaster was boosted by the subsequent success of Endowment at Carlisle.

Those with good memories will recall Star Selection finishing sixth in the 1994 2,000 Guineas. Recently, he won a maiden hurdle at Hereford with minimal fuss and can follow up at Catterick (3.00) on his handicap debut.



Ask Tom, left, is fancied to get back on the winning trail in the Victor Chandler Handicap Chase at Kempton

Unguided Missile can strike target

HAYDOCK PARK

BBC1



TODAY'S RACES
ON TELEVISION

KEMPTON PARK
CHANNEL 4

2.10: Rosencrantz enters calculations, having won his first two starts before just being pipped by Hay Dance, who has won since. The step up in trip should suit. *Elpidios* is also racing beyond two miles for the first time and can oblige. He was unseated by the slow pace at Doncaster last time, having previously stayed on well behind Penny A Day at Wetherby.

2.40: With Pridwell (likely to run at Haydock) keeping the weights down here, Martin Pipe can complete a valuable treble with his stablemate Make A Stand. Despite being eased down considerably last time when thrashing some novices, he still recorded a good time and looks up to winning again off a 9lb higher mark compared to when he won the William Hill Hurdle at Sandown.

3.10: Stately Home jumped particularly well when making all the running to beat some disappointing rivals at Sandown last time, but he will not have everything his own way here. Five To Seven, who also races from the front, has progressed with virtually every run over fences. He ran particularly well behind Naisirai last time. Beatson has completed a quick treble but this is a tougher test.

2.15: Ocean Hawk will be a warm order after his tenacious Ascot victory. The five-year-old had six lengths in hand of Pleasure Shared that day and meets that rival on identical terms here. However, because each of his four victories has come on right-handed tracks, Pleasure Shared is preferred on this occasion. Top Spin, further behind the principals at Ascot, is better off here but his winning record is poor.

3.10: see above.

2.15: Ocean Hawk will be a warm order after his tenacious Ascot victory. The five-year-old had six lengths in hand of Pleasure Shared that day and meets that rival on identical terms here. However, because each of his four victories has come on right-handed tracks, Pleasure Shared is preferred on this occasion. Top Spin, further behind the principals at Ascot, is better off here but his winning record is poor.

JULIAN MUSCAT

RICHARD EVANS

KEMPTON PARK

THUNDERER
12.40 Land Alar
1.10 Sea Victor
1.40 Fine Thyme
2.10 ROSENCRANTZ (nep)

2.40 Ashwell Boy
3.10 Calisso Bay
3.40 Five To Seven
4.10 Tangletfoot Tipple

The Times Private Handicapper's top rating:

2.10 BARFORD SOVEREIGN (nep).

Our Newmarket Correspondent: 2.10 BARFORD SOVEREIGN (nep).

GUIDE TO OUR IN-LINE RACECARD

10: 113143 GOOD TIMES 13 (6F, G, S) Mrs D Hobkirk B Hall 12-0

11: 113123 DOWN THE SELL 42 (6F, G, S) Mrs S Johnstone J Johnson 8-11

12: 113131 GOLDEN HELLO 35 (6F, G, S) Mr Shouter T Easterby 6-11

13: 113122 LISTER MAFIA 20 (6F, G, S) Mrs J Johnson J Johnson 6-11

14: 113112 MANDY'S MANDY 35 (6F, G, S) Mrs J Johnson J Johnson 7-11

15: 113121 MANDY'S MANDY 35 (6F, G, S) Mrs J Johnson J Johnson 7-11

BETTING: 7-4 Land Alar, 2-1 Down The Sell, 1-2 Mandy's Mandy, 9-2 Golden Hello, 6-1 Mandy Mandy.

1996 TRYING AGAIN 8-11-3 R Dunnock 5-3 G Sandwell 6-10

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Captain Jack, right, jumps fluently on his way to victory in the Rummymede Novices' Handicap Hurdle at Kempton

Summer Spell warms to task

BY JULIAN MUSCAT

HE MAY not have been the most appropriately named winner at a chilly Kempton Park yesterday, but Summer Spell warmed the hearts of a sparse crowd in winning the Walton Juvenile Novices' Hurdle with total authority.

The Alleged entire, a useful performer on the Flat, was entitled to move purposefully throughout the race. But his swift, accurate jumping proved a potent asset as he swept clear of Mr Wild and Quality, with Far Dawn, unbeaten in two previous outings, in fourth. Coral wasted no time in pricing Summer Spell at 16-1, from 33-1, for the Triumph Hurdle at Cheltenham.

Not a day will pass between now and March without Cheltenham quotes being scattered like confetti. Most will be meaningless but this one might prove significant for a race which, so far, has assumed no definition at all. It remains to be seen how Summer Spell copes with

hock-deep ground, but the prospect of testing conditions at Cheltenham is surely remote. This horse has all the Triumph Hurdle attributes — such as one can identify in previous winners.

Nicky Henderson knows more about that than most, having landed the prize with First: Bout and Alone Success. Although Henderson played it softly in the winner's enclosure, there was no disguising his excitement for the brown colt, the mount of Mick Fitzgerald. "The horse loved it. Mick said he was brilliant and it looked a good race. He has been working very well. Mind you, he probably finds working with my jumpers terribly easy."

Fitzgerald, who kept a hold of Summer Spell until after the final flight, adopted the same tactics aboard Sharpal in the Ashford Novices' Hurdle. However, as dangers loomed on either side, Sharpal jumped awkwardly, was slowly away from the obstacle and failed to contain Secret Spring on the short run-in.

This was another informative contest. Secret Spring had failed narrowly against Sammartino, prominent in the Champion Hurdle betting, at this venue three weeks ago. "Sammartino stayed the better," Peter Hedger, who trains Secret Spring, said. "It's nice to have another good one in the yard but he won't be going to Cheltenham. He needs a flat track so we will aim him at Aintree instead."

If Hedger was indulging in plenty of theory, Robert Alber was inclined to throw the manuals out of the horsebox after Super Tactics had prevailed by 14 lengths from Fine Harvest in an eventful renewal of the Easter Hero Handicap Chase.

Alber, not a believer in the merit of all-weather gallops, has had his string so badly held up that he all but withdrew Super Tactics. "The horse put on 30 kilos even after we cut back his feed," the trainer said. "I only ran him because he likes this place so much. They make fools of you, these horses."

Kempton Park

Going: good to firm

1.40 (Sm 110yd hole) 1, Captain Jack (D. Walsh, 6-4) 2, Biting Mantis (3-2; C. Mulligan) 3, Mr Wild (P. Mulligan) 4, Far Dawn (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £9.11

2.10 (2m ch) 1, Summer Spell (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

2.40 (2m ch) 1, Summer Spell (M. A. Fitzgerald, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £11.48

41. N. Henderson, Total: £34.00, DF: £11.80, Total: £22.00, Total: £12.00, CSF: £14.53

5.10 (Sm ch) 1, Dasher Daze (C. Meek, 6-2 fav) 2, Philo's Wood (D. 3-2; R. Ross) 3, Rose King (16-1) 4, Grey Smoke (9-1) 5, Sun 31, 6, Earth 7, Total: £20.00, DF: £13.00, Total: £12.00, Total: £12.00, CSF: £9.11

6.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

7.20 (2m ch) 1, Summer Spell (M. A. Fitzgerald, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £11.48

41. N. Henderson, Total: £34.00, DF: £11.80, Total: £22.00, Total: £12.00, CSF: £14.53

8.20 (2m ch) 1, Dasher Daze (C. Meek, 6-2 fav) 2, Philo's Wood (D. 3-2; R. Ross) 3, Rose King (16-1) 4, Grey Smoke (9-1) 5, Sun 31, 6, Earth 7, Total: £20.00, DF: £13.00, Total: £12.00, Total: £12.00, CSF: £9.11

9.20 (2m ch) 1, Summer Spell (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

10.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

11.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

12.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

13.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

14.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

15.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

16.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

17.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

18.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

19.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

20.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

21.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

22.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

23.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

24.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

25.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

26.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

27.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

28.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

29.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

30.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

31.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

32.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

33.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

34.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

35.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

36.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

37.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

38.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

39.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

40.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

41.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

42.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

43.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

44.20 (2m ch) 1, Super Tactics (P. Hartley, 6-2 fav) 2, Fine Harvest (7-2; S. Mulligan) 3, Sharpal (D. Mulligan) 4, Captain Jack (D. Mulligan) 5, Quality (D. Mulligan) 6, Zabadi (D. Mulligan) 7, DF 11-10, Total: £34.00, CSF: £47.55

THE TIMES GUIDE TO THE PREMIERSHIP THIS WEEKEND

ARSENAL

Arsenal's impressive FA Cup third-round replay victory at Sunderland on Wednesday proved that there is life after Ian Wright, and, for that matter, John Hartson. It was one of those unusual games in which no Arsenal player was sent off, and Dennis Bergkamp, soon to be suspended himself, scored a remarkable goal. If Arsenal do manage to get Hristo Stoichkov, the combustible Bulgaria forward, on loan from Barcelona, who will drop out of the attack? BG

DERBY COUNTY

Jim Smith, the manager, was asked at the pre-season photocall whether the squad numbers allocated to his players gave a clue to his first choice XI. "No, but there is a lad at No 17 who is a certainty," Smith replied. Since then Matt Carbon has been pushed out of the side by Paul McGrath, but injuries to Stivac and Yates have created a vacancy in the defence for the next month and Carbon plays at Chelsea today as Derby attempt to end a run of six matches without a win. RH

MANCHESTER UNITED

After the failures of their three-man central defence against Tottenham, United are likely to resume normal service at Coventry today. Irwin returns to play at left back, with Johnson and Pallister likely to play as centre backs, after both trained all week. Nicky Butt is missing from the midfield again, but Phil Neville is back after a bout of glandular fever. "I feel as if there's nothing wrong with me," he said, although he is still wearing a heart monitor during training. PB

SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY

Mark Bright will leave Wednesday in a £80,000 move to the Swiss club Sion this week. It comes as no surprise: Bright has been at odds with David Pleat, the manager, for some time. Back into the squad comes Wayne Collins, the summer signing from Crewe Alexandra whose injury early in the season coincided with the club's dramatic slump in form. The return of Collins has given Pleat hope that Wednesday can push themselves into contention at the right end of the table. DM

SUNDERLAND

Sunderland have lost Sam Allardyce, their youth development officer, who has been appointed manager of Notts County. Meanwhile, Lionel Perez, the French goalkeeper, aims to end the interest shown by Peter Reid, the manager, in Shay Given, the Blackburn reserve goalkeeper, by impressing against the visitors from Ewood Park today. Jan Eriksson, newly signed from Sweden, is expected to make his debut in central defence while Alex Rae and Martin Smith are poised to return.

ASTON VILLA

With Villa's midfield riven by injuries — Taylor and Draper are out — Sasa Curic, the disaffected Yugoslav, may return to the fold out of necessity against Liverpool this afternoon. "Something has clearly upset him," Brian Little, the manager, said. "I'm trying to get to the root of the problem and I've got a rough idea what it is. Hopefully, we'll get the whole thing sorted out soon." A physically fit and psychologically sound Curic is vital if Villa are to survive at Anfield. RK

EVERTON

Claus Thomsen, Everton's new signing from Ipswich, will make his debut tomorrow. Where is another matter. "Could be midfield, it could be at centre-back, or as one of a back three, depending on how we play," Joe Royle, the manager, said yesterday. Everton's injury list is showing few signs of improving, with Ebbrell and Parkinson still missing. Short was able to train, however, and with Watson, Barrett and Unsworth back in contention, Dunne may step down. PB

BLACKBURN ROVERS

Tony Parkes returned from Italy with the football equivalent of a school merit badge after visiting Sven Goran Eriksson, Blackburn's new manager. The Swede, in charge at Sampdoria, will not take control at Ewood Park until the end of the season, but he has given advice to the caretaker manager, as if it was needed. "He told us he was pleased with the way things are going, and to keep on the same," Parkes said. "We discussed transfer targets, but no one will be leaving." DM

LEEDS UNITED

Tony Yeo-ho's days at Elland Road appear to be numbered. Controversially, he turned out for Ghana last weekend despite being unfit for Leeds. After his return on Thursday he declared himself unfit to take part in a practice game with Scarborough. Halle, Molenaar and Palmer all played and will return at West Ham after missing the cup-tie at Crystal Palace. Lee Sharpe also played, scoring the goal in a 1-0 win, but Dorigo is again troubled by a hamstring injury. PB

CHELSEA

Roberto di Matteo had some encouraging words for Gianluca Vialli, his Italian compatriot who seems likely to begin the game against Derby on the bench once more and is not pleased about it. But while Hughes and Zola have unquestionably struck up a fine partnership in attack, Zola has been man-marked out of the game on too many occasions. Ruud Gullit, the manager, says that this should give more space to the other players, but, in practice, that has not been happening. BG

LEICESTER CITY

Mark O'Neill, the manager, is likely to make further additions to his squad next week having signed Matt Elliott, a central defender, from Oxford United for £1.6 million, a club record, two days ago. "If he was going to be impressed it was with the number of players I said I wanted to bring in," O'Neill said. Elliott makes his debut against Wimbledon today but Steve Walsh, recovered from a hernia operation, now requires surgery on his knee and is out for three more weeks. RH

COVENTRY CITY

Callers to Highfield Road early on Wednesday, before the FA Cup tie against Woking, were told there was no problem with the pitch and that no inspection was planned. Cue mass exodus from Surrey. Zola, the coach, on an ultimately fruitless trek. Gerald Ashby, the referee, also rang the club and yet, despite being informed that all was well, he felt he had no option, an hour before kick-off, but to postpone the game. How much blame were Coventry willing to accept? Correct. Not a frozen sausage. RK

LIVERPOOL

Roy Evans, the manager, has something of a headache as he ponders a game that will have a big impact on the positions at the top of the table. John Barnes, Neil Ruddock and Phil Babb are injured and Michael Thomas suspended. It means Jamie Redknapp returns after a month-long exile through injury, and the young Jamie Carragher, 19, will make his full debut. Liverpool must return to winning ways at home if they are to secure their first championship in seven years. DM



HOW THEY STAND

P	Pls	Goal	Diff	Last five	Lineup
23	43	+18	-18	LOWWW	LOWWW
22	41	+18	-18	LOWWW	LOWWW
3	40	+18	-18	LOWWW	LOWWW
4	39	+16	-16	LOWWW	LOWWW
5	38	+10	-10	WWLWD	WWLWD
6	38	+10	-10	MLWD	MLWD
7	35	+7	-7	MLWD	MLWD
8	35	+7	-7	MLWD	MLWD
9	31	+3	-3	MLWD	MLWD
10	28	-5	-5	DDWW	DDWW
11	27	-8	-8	DDWW	DDWW
12	24	-8	-8	DDWW	DDWW
13	23	-7	-7	WWWW	WWWW
14	22	-9	-9	WWWW	WWWW
15	20	-10	-10	DDWW	DDWW
16	19	-8	-8	WWWW	WWWW
17	18	-8	-8	WWWW	WWWW
18	18	-16	-16	WWWW	WWWW
19	18	-16	-16	WWWW	WWWW
20	18	-16	-16	WWWW	WWWW
21	18	-16	-16	WWWW	WWWW
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27	18	-16	-16	WWWW	WWWW
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103	18	-16	-16	WWWW	WWWW
104	18	-16	-16	WWWW	WWWW
105	18	-16	-16	WWWW	WWWW
106	18	-16	-16	WWWW	WWWW
107	18	-16	-16	WWWW	WWWW
108	18	-16	-16	WWWW	WWWW
109	18	-16	-16	WWWW	WWWW
11					



Ravanelli celebrates scoring for his beloved Juventus in typically ecstatic fashion. He may return to Italy after his unhappy exile in England. Photograph: Dusan Vranic

Ravanelli poised to bolt again

Fabrizio Ravanelli exploded again this week. Middlesbrough were doomed. Relocation was coming. There was no hope of salvation. It was all truly tragic. Just as it had been, for somewhat different reasons, when he left Juventus last July.

Come un fulmine dal ciel sereno (like a bolt from the blue), Ravanelli used the phrase twice in his torrid and dramatic summer of 1996. The first time somewhat self-indulgently, the second with good reason.

The first occasion came with the Italy team at the start of the European championship. Ravanelli was trailing clouds of glory — even if the clouds would prove to lack a silver lining. He it was, after all, who had scored the Juventus goal the previous month in Rome's Olympic Stadium, in the European Cup final against Ajax. Scored it with an extraordinary shot from the sharpest of angles, after a blunder in the Dutch defence.

He arrived in England — where he would soon so unexpectedly return — with an injury to his Achilles tendon. He was clearly unfit to play in the opening match against Russia and Arrigo Sacchi, the Italy manager, left him out, provoking Ravanelli's irrational outburst. How could they do this to him?

In the event, with Russia beaten, Sacchi, surely against his better judgment, brought on Ravanelli as a late substitute. Twice Ravanelli had chances to increase Italy's lead, twice he failed. There seemed no way he could be picked for the second game, against the Czechs, in Manchester.

but he was. Could Sacchi have been intimidated? He made five unforced changes. Ravanelli struggled again, and the Italians lost. Out they went.

Early in July, Ravanelli was at home in his native Perugia, where he had begun his career, preparing to go on holiday. Suddenly, he was summoned to Turin by Juventus, to be told by Roberto Bettega, himself a former Juve star and now vice-president, that he would be transferred to Middlesbrough for £7 million. Bryan Robson, the Middlesbrough manager, was there. It was the second time Ravanelli had been struck by a bolt from the blue.

In the midst of his embittered lamentations, he might have reflected that his fate was sealed in the 77th minute of that European Cup final. It was then that Marcello Lippi, Juve's manager, with whom Ravanelli had often had his ups and downs, decided to substitute him.

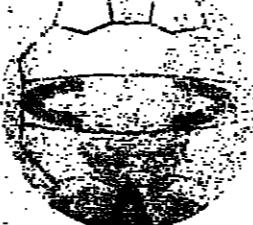
With words and insulting gesture, Ravanelli made his feelings known. "He told Lippi to go to hell once too often," an Italian critic wrote.

Ravanelli was now distraught. "I'd be a hypocrite if I said I wasn't sorry," he said. "I am very distressed. I'm Juventus through to my soul. You can understand my state of mind at the moment. It's terrible. They chuck me out like someone who isn't any use. I understand they had no more faith in me. And I know when to thank." Obviously, Marcello Lippi.

"I thought I was a point of reference for Juve," he said. "I feel betrayed, as a professional and as a man. I never thought for a moment Juve could give up someone like me.

FABRIZIO RAVANELLI

THE FACE OF FOOTBALL



By Brian Glanville

Not just that. When Gianluca Viali left to join Chelsea, I felt sorry — but also touch of pride. I told myself they make me captain. I was living in another world."

Still, there was Robson — and there was the money. Perhaps not as much as the reputed £42,000 a week but infinitely more than the £250,000 a year he was getting from Juventus. Of Robson, he said: "He enchanted me. A man of great charisma."

The enchantment, as we know, did not endure. Just a few weeks ago, on Italian television, Ravanelli was letting fly at what he perceived as the inadequacies of Middlesbrough's training. British footballers, he sneered, could run and run, but had

no idea how to accelerate at the right time. As for his own training, he had to ask Juventus for regular programmes, to stay in shape.

Italian football journalists would hardly have been surprised; they were well used to Ravanelli's outbursts, not least when things went wrong at Juventus and he found himself in camp with the Italy team. "When things go well, he's fine," says a Turin sports journalist, "but he can take criticism of any kind."

A psychological quirk, a basic lack of self-confidence, or a consequence of Ravanelli's hard early years as a professional? Who can say. Certainly his path to the top was not easy.

Italian clubs will pick up promising players as young as 13. Ravanelli, by contrast, slogged away for years in the lower divisions. Perugia are now a Serie A club, but not when he played for them. He was powerful and brave, but far from the alert, sophisticated, intelligent player he would in time become.

He had three seasons in the third division with Perugia, who sold him to Avellino. Ravanelli could not settle in the southern town and, to the ire of the Serie B club, left for another third division season with Casertana. He was improving all the time, however, and when he moved to Reggina, in Serie B, he took off. So much so, that in 1992, when he was 23, Juventus bought him.

Merely as a reserve, it was supposed, but injuries to men like Viali gave him his chance and he surprised Juve with his dynamic form. In his four seasons there, he scored 41 goals in the championship, five against

CSKA Sofia in a single Uefa Cup game, plus the goal that helped to win the European Cup.

Nicknamed *La Perina Bianca* (the White Feather) for his prematurely white hair, he is a modest, emotional, impulsive man and his celebration — shirt pulled over his head after scoring — became famous.

Today he plays for Middlesbrough against Sheffield Wednesday and next Wednesday he will expect to be in Italy's attack against Northern Ireland in Palermo, under the new management of Cesare Maldini.

A year ago, against Wales on a flooded pitch in Terni that he deemed unplayable, Ravanelli put on an astonishing exhibition of strength and skill, scoring one goal, making another. He talked endlessly, delighted not only by his performance, but by the fact that he had brought a hostile crowd on to his side.

Resentful of a star who came from nearby Perugia, the fans initially jeered him. By the end, they were not whistling but cheering him. "I felt an emotion of incredible intensity," he said. "The real fans shouted 'Clowns' to those on the terraces. I reacted and increased my efforts a hundredfold. If I was already feeling good, from then on, I felt great."

Just as he did when he began his Premiership career at Middlesbrough with a hat-trick against Liverpool. Since then, he has had a curate's egg of a season, like the team itself. Meanwhile, it seems most unlikely he will be on Teesside next season. He wants to go back to Juventus, but would Marcello Lippi wear it?

Beer match that left captain in the lurch

SIMON BARNES



On Saturday

If you want to get thrown out of Sydney Cricket Ground, you have got to do something pretty good. "I know nothing about urinating," Jason Taylor, captain of North Sydney Bears rugby league team, said. "But there was an incident with some tomato sauce where the blokes rubbed it into one another. Some of the sauce got on a bloke's T-shirt. He got upset and I can understand that."

"A bloke three rows back threw some beer over me. I shouldn't have reacted, but I stood up. When I did so the crowd started shouting out my name. That prompted the security guards and they said I had to go." It was all a misunderstanding, you see.

"It looked terrible on TV, like I'd been drinking and spilling beer all over myself all night."

Perish la pensée! I regret now I went to the cricket," Taylor has been told by the local Wyong council that his services as Australia Day ambassador will no longer be required tomorrow week.

Beer match that left captain in the lurch

What means more to Australia than its proud traditions?

Manly sport, patriotism, beating the Poms, beating the world? Does anything matter more than these things? Only money. The Australian Rugby Union (ARU) has decided to ditch that proud and ancient symbol of the golden jumper, worn during 30 years of adventuring across the world of rugby union. The ARU has done a deal worth Aus \$6 million with Reebok, under which Reebok can muck it up all they like. The new jersey is a ghastly flashy mess with green-and-white flashes on a gold background. "It maintains the intrinsic and much-loved green and predominantly gold and I believe retains the great traditions of Australian rugby," Jon O'Neill, the ARU chief executive, said. Well, England's own Rugby Football Union won't be selling out like that this year. They sold out years ago. The surprising thing is that Australia was prepared to sell the moral high ground over the Poms for such a small sum.

All that glitters

Waugh at a loss

I would like you all to join with me in mourning the sadness of Steve Waugh, that most likeable of Australian cricketers.

He has managed to set a record for Australia cricket: he has taken part in 11 consecutive one-day defeats.

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Playing the joker

I read that the pyrotechnical Bulgarian footballer, Hristo Stoichkov, is to join Arsenal. Be warned: Stoichkov, besides having an on-pitch presence that makes Eric Cantona look shy and tentative, is a practical joker of some cruelty. His colleague at Barcelona, the Brazilian, Ronaldo, was rudely awakened from his slumbers by one of the directors and asked why he was not at training. Stoichkov had told him training was scheduled for the afternoon. Ronaldo, not Stoichkov, was fined. Mark Twain once said that "a German joke is no laughing matter"; the same is clearly true of Bulgarian jokes.

Fisherman's tale

Time for a fish story. One of the most ancient and revered

records in American fishing lore is the 41-year-old mark for the smallmouth bass. The record was yanked out of

the Dade Hollow Reservoir, Ken-

tucky, in 1955 by Dave Hayes

and it weighed an amazing

11lb 1oz. But now an affidavit

from his guide on the occa-

sion, John Barlow, has come

to light. Barlow, it seems,

stuffed 3lb of lead weights

into the fish before it was

officially weighed. But he felt

guilty afterwards and filed the

affidavit — which was

promptly ignored by the res-

ervoir overseers. Now it has

knocked. Soma Singh twisted

an ankle in the Los Reyes

tournament in Barcelona and

Duthie may not have fully

recovered from a shoulder

injury suffered earlier.

Cannock entertain Old

Loughtonians, who are six

points behind and desperate to

make up the leeway.

The absence of Halls, who is

still serving a disciplinary

ban, imposes heavier burdens

on Morrison and Robinson in

Old Loughtonians' defence.

East Grinstead are at full

strength for their home fixture

against Reading.

■ Paddy Selman, a former

international hockey umpire,

died in hospital at Worthing

on Monday, aged 82. He was

one of the umpires in the first

World Cup tournament, in

Barcelona in 1971.

Source: Ski Club of Great Britain.

SNOW REPORTS

	Depth (cm)	Conditions	Runs to Off/p resort	Weather (Spm)	Last 'G' snow
AUSTRIA	L U	Piste			
Mayrhofen	5 70	poor varied	closed	line	4 25/12
	(Spring conditions with slush in afternoons)				
FRANCE					
Avoritz	125	good	heavy	good	sun -3 9/1
	(Generally good skiing; still sunny)				
Megeve	55	good	varied	hard	sun 1 9/1
	(Piste conditions hard-packed in most areas)				
Menzel	80	130	fair	modus	sun -1 10/1
	(Still mostly good but worn/snow patches growing)				
ITALY					
Corvara	60	115	good	crust	fair sun 3 10/1
	(South facing slopes slushy in pm, mostly good)				
Livigno	85	200	fair	heavy	fair sun -3 7/1
	(Good snow above 2,000m; slopes very quiet)				
SWITZERLAND					
C Montafon	40	285	good	varied	far line 3 9/1
	(Everything open and mostly good; some worn spots)				
Klosters	20	130	good	varied	far fine 5 4/1
	(Snow remains good at altitude, above 1,900m)				

L - lower slopes; U - upper

BOXING

Brown has capability to revive world claims

By DAVID MADDOCK

THE most interesting, and indeed significant, contests of the day in the FA Carling Premiership are linked not only by their bearing on affairs at the business end of the table,

MOTOR RACING 47

Hill put through trial by ordeal at Silverstone

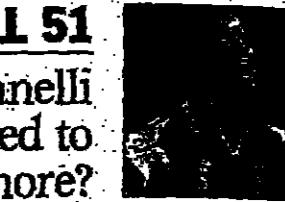


SPORT

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FOOTBALL 51

Is Ravanelli poised to bolt once more?



Briton's promising run in Australian Open ends in swift defeat by Chang

Henman serves up false dawn

FROM MICHAEL HENDERSON
IN MELBOURNE

ILLUSIONS, illusions. Tim Henman had given a fair performance this week as a man of destiny but when the moment of truth arrived under the lights of the centre court of Melbourne Park, he appeared to be a man of straw. Michael Chang did not just beat him. He sent him packing 6-1, 7-6, 6-3 with unmistakable ease.

In his moment of defeat Henman was slightly teary, which is not a bad thing so long as he is honest with himself in the more contemplative moments that lie ahead. "I think by the time I walk out of the door I will have forgotten about this," he said, while at the same time admitting there were lessons to be learnt from such a resounding loss. In other words, he will not have forgotten about it at all, and he will not be permitted to until he beats a player of comparable stature in an important competition.

Results 46

This was a big match and it proved much too big for him.

He was vanquished, utterly, and no amount of film-flammetry can alter that basic, undeniable fact. Chang's mastery had the subsidiary effect of silencing the knot of English spectators, many wearing faces daubed with the flag of St George, who were "harracking" for Henman, as the Australians put it. They, too, were obliged to admit that their man's passage through this tournament had been illusory.

After trouncing Andrei Pavel and Guillaume Raoux without dropping a set, Henman was in turn outplayed by a man whose superior athleticism and cunning, revealed the distance between the Englishman's ambition and his capacity to fulfil it. There was precious little conviction in his tennis and, without that quality, no sportsman is ever going to impose himself, particularly when his opponent is committed in the way Chang showed him to be.

The boorish roar that greeted Henman's first successful point, when Chang netted a backhand, brought some light



Dejection is etched deep into Henman's face during his straight-sets defeat by Chang, the No 2 seed, in the third round of the Australian Open at Melbourne Park

relief to a serious business. After Henman held his own service he then lost the next five games to surrender the first set in 26 minutes of painful self-realisation. He had twice held advantage on Chang's service in the fifth game, and the way he subsided set the tone for the night. The American was too imposing, too experienced on the big points.

In that first set Henman had been outplayed. Chastened, and apparently full of resolve, he launched the sec-

ond set with some rippling strokes, driving back Chang as Chang had previously driven him. When he broke his service, and won the next game to love, he was 4-1 up; a new man, almost. He even broke Chang again to go 5-3 ahead before losing the next game to four unforced errors. When it went to a tie-break, Chang carried the first three points and won 7-3.

It had been a critical session of play. "Even though I played poorly," Henman said, "it should still have been one set

all. In future, if I can get there, I'll be able to say 'let's start again'. I was given my chance tonight and I didn't take it."

Henman talked a rather better game, in fact, than the one he had played. "I still have the belief that the next time I come up against him I can win. Even after playing 13 matches in three weeks I feel fresh and capable physically. I will probably forget about this and think about the start to the year."

Nerves, he said, played no

part in the performance. "I have played against people of similar class before, but I served pretty badly tonight and I never found much rhythm from the baseline. I made life difficult for myself, and made it easier for him. I was looking forward to the occasion, a match under lights on centre court, but I am not going to look into it any more than at the moment."

Chang, seeded behind Petr Sampras, will now play Andrei Medvedev in the quarter-finals, and is determined to

add a second grand-slam title to his list after the French Open he won as a 17-year-old.

He hardly saw enough of Henman to make an authoritative comment, but managed to say something complimentary about a "bright future ahead".

Henman, for his part, was grateful for the support of the small band of vocal Englishmen in the crowd, probably no more than 25 in number for all the talk of "Henmania". "It shows that in tennis, and not just in England, I am begin-

ning to make an impact," he said.

He has made an impact, but the support he enjoyed here had little to do with that. The people rooting for him belonged to the floating crew whose interest in sport is temporary, and rooted mainly in the big occasions. There was not as much silly behaviour as one might have expected and there was a funny moment when an English voice suddenly beseeched Henman: "England expects!"

It still does.

Premiership guide 50
Space for Dalglish 51

heard the rumours that Milan were ready to sell a lot of players and I wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't ask for Maldini," Gullit said. "I can't imagine Milan would sell him, but I had to ask."

Arte, Wenger, the Arsenal manager, yesterday denied reports that the north London club was trying to sign Hristo Stoichkov, the Bulgaria and Barcelona striker, on loan.

Birmingham City have signed Anders Limpar, Everton's Swedish winger, for £100,000 until the end of the season. Limpar's contract at Goodison Park was due to run out in June and he would have been able to return to Europe on a free transfer.

The domestic transfer system in England is to be overhauled after the Bosman ruling by the European court. The Football Association is proposing that a professional player who is over 24 years old and out of contract should be available on a free transfer to another club. However, clubs that have signed a youngster will be entitled to compensation for training the player up to the age of 21 if they want to move to a new club rather than sign a new three-year contract with his existing club. The compensation will be assessed by a panel.

England's batsmen, meanwhile, are likely to be denied the chance of taking a preparatory look at Simon Doull, 21, the highly-rated New Zealand fast bowler. Doull plays his club cricket for Northern Districts but the New Zealand management are well aware that he could be a secret weapon in the Test.

Steve Double, the FA spokesman, said: "Our feeling is that the new system will bring us into line with the Bosman ruling and also with many other nations in Europe and keep the issue out of the courts. It is most unlikely that this new system will be in place before the summer and it is more likely that it will come into effect in 1998. At this stage it is still a document to be discussed."

Northern lights can illuminate rugby

BY DAVID HANNS
RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

IT HAS become fashionable in the increasingly sour Nineties to deride not only successful individuals but successful institutions. The tall-poppies syndrome, as the Australians call it, has a particularly English equivalent — the blooming rose plucked of its petals, one might say — and rugby union is no different.

Thus the five nations' championship that begins today in Edinburgh and Dublin is compared unfavourably, every day it seems, with the game as played in the southern hemisphere. We blind ourselves to the championship's virtues and blithely accept that everything in the Australasian garden is wonderful, even when the evidence of the inaugural tri-nations championship last year is less than overwhelming.

It is true that rugby at its best is played in the southern hemisphere, but then what else is new? For nearly a century New Zealanders and South Africans have been playing a more effective, more

McGeechan will be in Edin-

FIVE NATIONS CHAMPIONSHIP



FIXTURES: Today: Ireland v France, Scotland v Wales, February 1: England v Scotland, Wales v Ireland; February 15: Ireland v England, France v Wales; March 1: England v France, Scotland v Ireland; March 15: France v Scotland, Wales v England.

brough today, paying special attention to the half backs who oppose each other in Scottish and Welsh colours. The Lions manager, Fran Cotton, travels to Ireland to study their candidates, who include the rumbling Keith Wood, not only the Ireland hooker but also their captain, which, in itself, puts him in line for the Lions role.

John Hart, the New Zea-

land coach, is among those who admire the five nations' championship but asks why it cannot be developed. That can be achieved not only by improved playing skills but by the admission of new blood — Italy are not so much knock-

ing on the door as kicking the hinges off — or by the sort of bonus points system introduced in the tri-nations series and, nearer home, in the Welsh League.

Judging by the pronouncements from home unions repre-

sentatives in Dublin yes-

terday, Italy will have to wait.

Vernon Pugh, of Wales, who is also chairman of the International Rugby Football Board, said: "Italy have been told the door is open but it has to be demonstrated over a period of time that they have the competitive capacity to march and beat some of the five nations' sides."

"No one is saying that they have to win, for example, three out of five games but their leading club sides weren't too successful in this season's European competition."

Cotton believes that the

southern hemisphere advan-

tage derives from their suc-
cessful Super 12 series but that is no accident; it has been developing over the past de-
cade, from Super 6 to Super 10 and, in a quasi-professional environment, even before the admission of full-scale profes-
sionalism in August 1995. In

Britain, by contrast, there has been no preparation for the professional game, political debate still holds centre stage and forward planning is hindered accordingly.

Because of their playing strength and traditions, the five nations' championship desperately needs a strong lead from England and France which, as matters stand, it is by no means certain of getting. Nothing provokes a more positive reac-

tion from the Celtic countries than the assumption that Eng-
land will roll over them and positive rugby is what the championship needs more than anything else. We have seen it on the club scene and it is time the five nations' reflected that.

Driven Ashton, page 46
Wales' mission, page 46

Russell determined to make his mark

FROM A CORRESPONDENT IN HAMILTON

JACK RUSSELL has vowed to fight on against the "monotony" of being the forgotten man of England's winter tour.

Russell, condemned to almost total inactivity by Eng-

land's decision to use Alec

Stewart as wicket-keeper-bat-
man in the Test side, has

played only three one-day
matches during the 55-day-old
campaign in Zimbabwe and
New Zealand.

Todays Russell appears for

his old club, Tukupuna, in an
Auckland League fixture — a
move designed to give him
much-needed match practice.

The Gloucestershire wicket-

keeper does not rule out a
further appearance for the club

he played for from 1983 to 1985 if the selection policy does not change.

Russell said: "The only time

in my cricket career that I have experienced such a long period of inactivity like this was during my very first England tour — to Pakistan in 1987 — when I think I played 1½ days' cricket in eight weeks. But I was a youngster

then, learning my trade, and as you get older it gets harder to be on the sidelines. It has become a bit monotonous. It was great just to get out on the field as a substitute fielder the other day in Palmerston North."

"I'm in a position where

you have two options — give
up or fight on, and I am not
prepared to give up yet."

Russell fixed up his club
match after confirming that

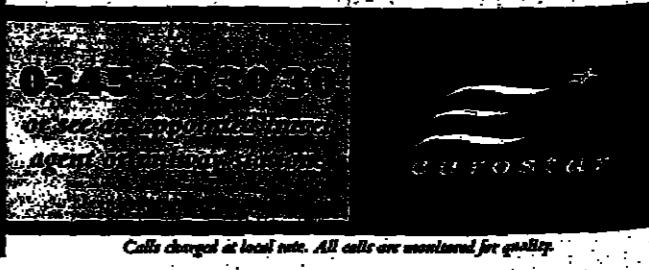
he would not be playing in the
four-day match against Northern
Districts. England's final warm-up
match before the first Test in Auckland next week.

England's batsmen, mean-
while, are likely to be denied
the chance of taking a preparatory
look at Simon Doull, 21, the highly-rated New Zealand fast bowler. Doull plays

his club cricket for Northern
Districts but the New Zealand
management are well aware
that he could be a secret weapon
in the Test.

David frits India, page 47

On Eurostar, the journey is to be enjoyed, not endured. You have the space to concentrate on the job in hand. Working on your laptop, reading a novel, having a meal, taking a stroll or just dropping gently off to sleep. Tough at the top, isn't it?



Room to work, move, relax.

51
Duberry
plays
the injury
part in
Gap Open
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ideas that
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THE TIMES

weekend

SATURDAY JANUARY 18 1997

50 من الرسم
Five-page
special on
holidays
in France
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Jeffrey's very private view

When maverick
chronicler of
London's secret
history
Iain Sinclair
asked Lord
Archer to show
off his riverside
art collection,
he didn't expect
to get a
look in. Then
the invitation
arrived . . .

I approached Alembic House, Lord Archer's Lambeth gaaff, with a pistol to my head and hands tied behind my back. As it were, I had promised my wife that I would be on my very best behaviour; no jibes, no sneers, no cheap satire. None of the usual knee-jerk, formulaic, picaresque comedy. This would be disinterested reportage, a nice blend of *Modern Painters* and *Hello!* Footnoted gush. Discreet tracking shots across the Archer art hoard, admiring references to the famous Thames views.

I put my request in writing, explaining that I wanted to look over the collection and to weigh the pictorial values against the expressionist raids on this stretch of the river by the painters Oskar Kokoschka and John Bellany. I thought I might experiment with the Alan Whicker treatment, tiptoeing across Persian rugs while Archer talked me through the glittering acquisitions.

For a sweetener, the postscript to my letter dropped the name (with her permission) of an in-law of mine, a close friend of Jeffrey Archer's from his Oxford days. This is why, where my wife was concerned, I was dancing on eggshells. Her family had no problem in drawing a distinction between the relative merits of blood ties and speculative literature. Their sense of tribal self-interest made the Mafia look like wimples with a suntan. Fiction writing was, properly, a kind of hobby: unfortunate, but tolerable if I brought in cash or fame. In essence, it was all exhibition of bad manners. If such matters had to be performed in public, then Archer came as close as anyone to managing them with the proper style — by divorcing himself from textual mess and running the operation as effectively as any other public company. There was a highly visible product identity and no author. A trick for which I felt immoderate envy.

Alembic House, 93 Albert Embankment, is one of London's worst-kept secrets: anyone who can pick up a newspaper knows that Jeffrey Archer has bagged the top two floors, and spent almost £2 million refurbishing them. A show home for a social balloonist. Wouldn't you — if you could? If you had the bottle. If



Lord Archer, in near perfect alignment between the art treasures of his riverside home and the power of the Houses of Parliament: "a great place for hatching plots"

you were prepared to expose yourself to all that metropolitan magnificence, the Houses of Parliament, the Tate Gallery, the great bridges of London in perfect alignment. You can't get more upwardly mobile without taking on oxygen. This is the ultimate "riverside opportunity", the one the estate agents pay homage to in their Rotherhithe brochures.

The Alembic House lift was heavily quilted like a soft cell. It would absorb any cries for help. We were deposited in a panelled hallway, an ante-chamber with no obvious exit. We felt as if we had blundered into the coda of Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the lift had been a rebirth and now we had to choose the

right door. We scratched and tapped at the panels. Then, all at once, one of them swung back and an attractive young Sloane, crisp and efficient, appeared — to tell us that, unfortunately, Archer was away working on a book, and his son William, the art-history graduate and archivist of the collection, was not available to give us the tour, but we could help ourselves to the views in which we had expressed so much interest.

Game, set, and probably match, to Jeffrey. He had demonstrated his magnanimity by allowing us (myself and photographer Marc Atkins) to do precisely what I had requested in my letter — ponder the art collection and photograph the

splendid riverside prospects. I was in his debt — but he had not presented me with the opportunity to indulge in any form of interrogation, however bland. Absent, he was immune to ridicule, while I was obliged to do the decent thing by tactfully listing his possessions. Flawlessly played.

The secretary — personal assistant — retreated to her gantry, leaving us to come to terms with this gobsmacking exhibition of wealth and privilege. It would be a strong man who didn't fantasise about having the use of this flat, the low London skies, the glittering river. A great place for hatching plots, planning coups, or

indulging in cosmological meditation, but a hopeless place for hammering away at the keyboard. How could you compete with the panorama that enveloped you?

I've never been in a writer's home — if you could call this a home — that hit you with such a sense of its separateness.

The qualitative difference that Scott Fitzgerald (one of the authors Archer purports to collect) saw as dividing the rest of us from the seriously rich. This was wealth as a vocation. I was used to apologetic cribs, part inherited, part salvaged — book wrecks, uncorseted sofas — not so much lived in as resurrected. The writer's life as an unequal struggle with chaos theory. Provisional slums

awaiting the big advance, the Finnish translation that would furnish a new set of curtains. Archer, a born-again cad, not content with buying his own furniture, had the chutzpah to have it made in larger than life size. He'd perch on one of these striped satin thrones like a mosquito on a tiger's nose.

I pondered Archer's indulgence in allowing us to wander freely over his fabulous domain. I had written to half-a-dozen others with a stake in this stretch of the river — painters, archivists, businessmen, key-holders — asking for interviews, intelligence, permission to view. Universal silence.

We were in Archer's debt and it left us uncomfortable. Perversely, it was the character

who had shown most faith in our project (whatever that was) that we trusted least. The leap of consciousness required to calmly evaluate the penthouse was beyond us. We were almost obliged to demonstrate our integrity by throwing ourselves from the balcony.

The spacious L-shaped apartment is on two levels, with the river-facing office/study set above the reception area, and accessed by marble stairs, flanked with golden griffins (multiples of the Maltese Falcon). The design is by Julian Dakowski — who also renovated the kitchen at Granchester. The eastern arm of the L faces downriver: the Houses of Parliament on the left bank and St Thomas' hospital on the right, with the three bridges (Lambeth, Westminster, Hungerford) diminishing in perfect perspective. Sitting at the end window, sundowner in hand, a tragic poet with a taste for sentimental elegies would have

This is a show home for a social balloonist. You can't get more upwardly mobile without taking on oxygen. It is the ultimate "riverside opportunity", the one the estate agents pay homage to in their Rotherhithe brochures .

been uniquely placed to watch the *Marchioness* pleasure boat go down.

Archer's collection is "one of the most valuable in the land . . . which some estimate could be worth around £10 million": an assertion of his own taste, displayed in a building which has paid for with his own cash, and which he makes more readily available to students and busybodies (such as Atkins and myself) than the galleries that we have been required to support. Archer's current exhibition can look across the river at the Tate without blushing. At £10 million, if that random figure means anything, his holdings are negligible, no more significant than the meretricious trash amassed for Robert Maxwell's posthumous jumble sale. It couldn't be compared, for example, with the collection accumulated by the Dublin fertiliser magnate Sir Basil Goulding — with his Expressionist portfolio, magnificent examples of Kokoschka and Jack B. Yeats. Archer is more of a Jacobean, an adventurer, a New Man confirming his status by exhibiting a cabinet of curiosities.

But the scale and the organisation of Archer's set — right down to the vases of dying lilies — is one we have previously encountered only in public

Continued on page 2

SHOPPING . . . 23 GARDENING . . . 45 PROPERTY . . . 68 HOME LIFE . . . 12 FAMILY LIFE . . . 13 COUNTRY LIFE . . . 15 TRAVEL . . . 17-25 GAMES . . . 27

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SERIOUS SHOPPING THE VILLAGE SHOP



BY PHILIP DELVES BROUGHTON

Nostalgia aside, there is little reason why anyone would want to shop in village shops. Unless, of course, they live on a diet of over-priced corned beef, sponge fingers and stale Sugar Puffs. No amount of heart-of-the-community talk can make up for the fact that, for the most part, village shops are poorly stocked, overpriced and no contest for the air-conditioned, wide-aisled pleasure of out-of-town supermarkets.

Different shops have chosen different paths to survival. The most pathetic are those which have gone beyond *Ragù* and turned themselves into feeble imitations of the urban delicatessen. In shopping terms, they are the equivalent of those early Italian restaurants which served spaghetti, mince and ketchup and called it bolognese. With limp lemon grass

and curling parma ham, the owners are like awkward farmhands at the village squire's table, struggling to please the city weekenders. "Cod, it's so sweet," bray the visitors on first arriving, "we must buy everything here, so good for the community." In a few weeks, however, they are turning up for the weekend with boxes of artichoke hearts and pannetone from some darling city creep called Ontario. The shop becomes nothing more than somewhere to grab a packet of *Silkies en route* to the Michelin-starred pub-restaurant down the road.

At *Wisteria Cottage*, East Hendred, Oxfordshire, however, they seem to have found a way forward for the village shop. Wrapped in a mid-morning mist, its protruding window glows with those emergency staples: cereal, bread, and Matey, "the bubbles

bubble bath". Old ladies pulling

their trolleys, and peroxide teenagers in army surplus clothes, breeze in and out. It looks easily the cosiest place in a very cosy village, not in the least bit threatened by the mega-markets throb-bing just a few miles away.

The owner is Helen Noll, a deeply practical, big-sisterly woman in her early thirties, who, with her husband, began renting the 500-year-old shop two years ago. A door behind the till leads through to her house. The kitchen also serves as laundry room and office, and the smell of washing powder and laundered Y-fronts mingles with that of the soup on the Aga. "It's farmhouse soup, which can mean just about any-

bubble bath". Old ladies pulling their trolleys, and peroxide teenagers in army surplus clothes, breeze in and out. It looks easily the cosiest place in a very cosy village, not in the least bit threatened by the mega-markets throb-bing just a few miles away.

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thing," Mrs Noll says. "We make it every day, particularly for the older people, who like to take it away for lunch."

On one side of the shop is the

post office, a dark, wooden cubicle, with just enough room for the postmistress to squeeze in. This is the focus for all that Ealing comedy-style village chatter. "She's just had her blood check and the baby's due in February, no April," said one woman, discussing her daughter with two friends. Another elderly woman, her head wrapped tightly in a blue and gold scarf, handed a fat letter across the counter, addressed to New York. "I couldn't stop writing this time," she said. "I hope she has time to read it all." "I'm sure she will," the postmistress reassured. Talk of saving the *Tiffield Thunderbolt* and rescuing wee Timmy from the mill pond was doubtless scheduled for the afternoon.

In the fridge are pork sausages brought in each evening by a man in the village who works at Fellers, a butcher in Oxford's covered market. The milk is full fat, un-homogenised and comes from the Mount Pleasant dairies in Oxfordshire. "We call it happy milk," Mrs Noll says. Thick white loaves of bread from Chieveley, near Newbury, sit on top of the cheese counter alongside chocolate sponge and madeira cakes. English wine from a local vineyard and honey from an apiary on a nearby farm are also on sale.

Aside from being an outlet for local English goodies, the shop remains a focus for the village. In the summer it organises a marmalade competition, which is judged by Father Robin, the Catholic priest, and a fund-raising karaoke and pig roast evening after the summer fete. Fairy lights are

thrown up round the garden an everyone from the council houses residents at the top of the village. Lord Jenkins of Hillhead and the fast livers of the local racing community joins in. Even J.F. Priestley would have to have been in a particularly purple mood to invent this lot.

A rustic delicatessen then, steeped in sponge-fingered traditions, this may be the future for the village shop.

Since her arrival as the shop keeper, Mrs Noll has already been asked to be godmother to one local child. As her tally of godchildren rises, and it undoubtedly will, and she grows into ever more of an Aunty Bun, she and East Hendred will have found a way to cook their villagey snook at the corporate retailing monsters, hungry for their business.

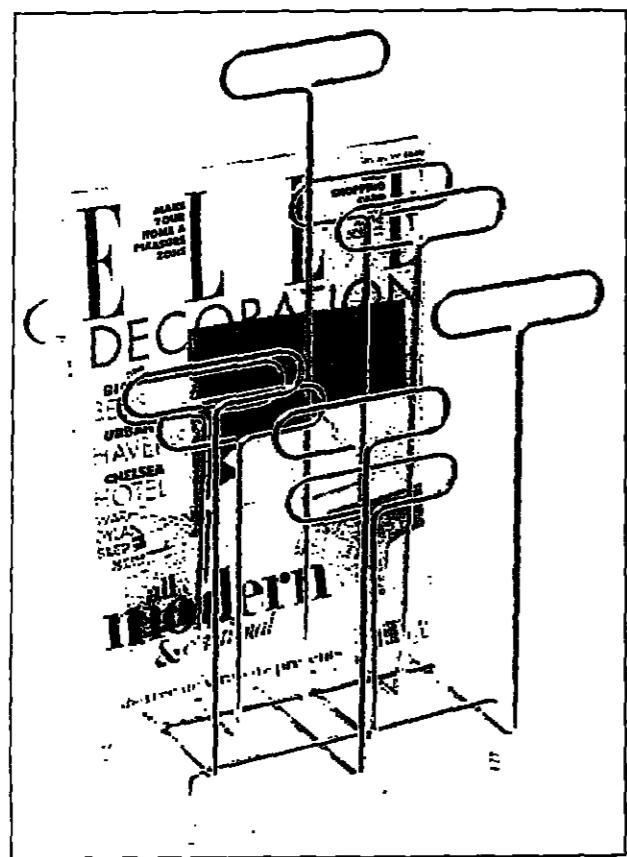
• *Giles Coren is away.*

Don't stack it

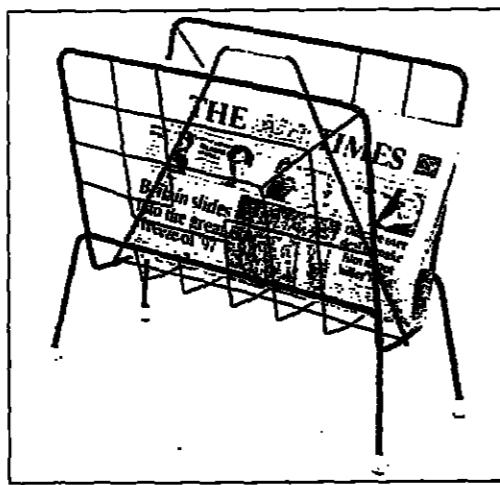
simply rack it

COMPULSIVE magazine and newspaper buying has its down side: you have to live with a tower of messy journals on the brink of collapse and the tricky manoeuvre of extracting the one you want that is always at the bottom of the pile. The solution is a magazine rack — anything from a wire basket to a wooden design classic. Here's a selection of the best.

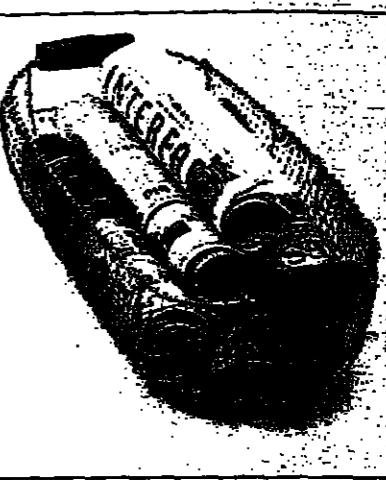
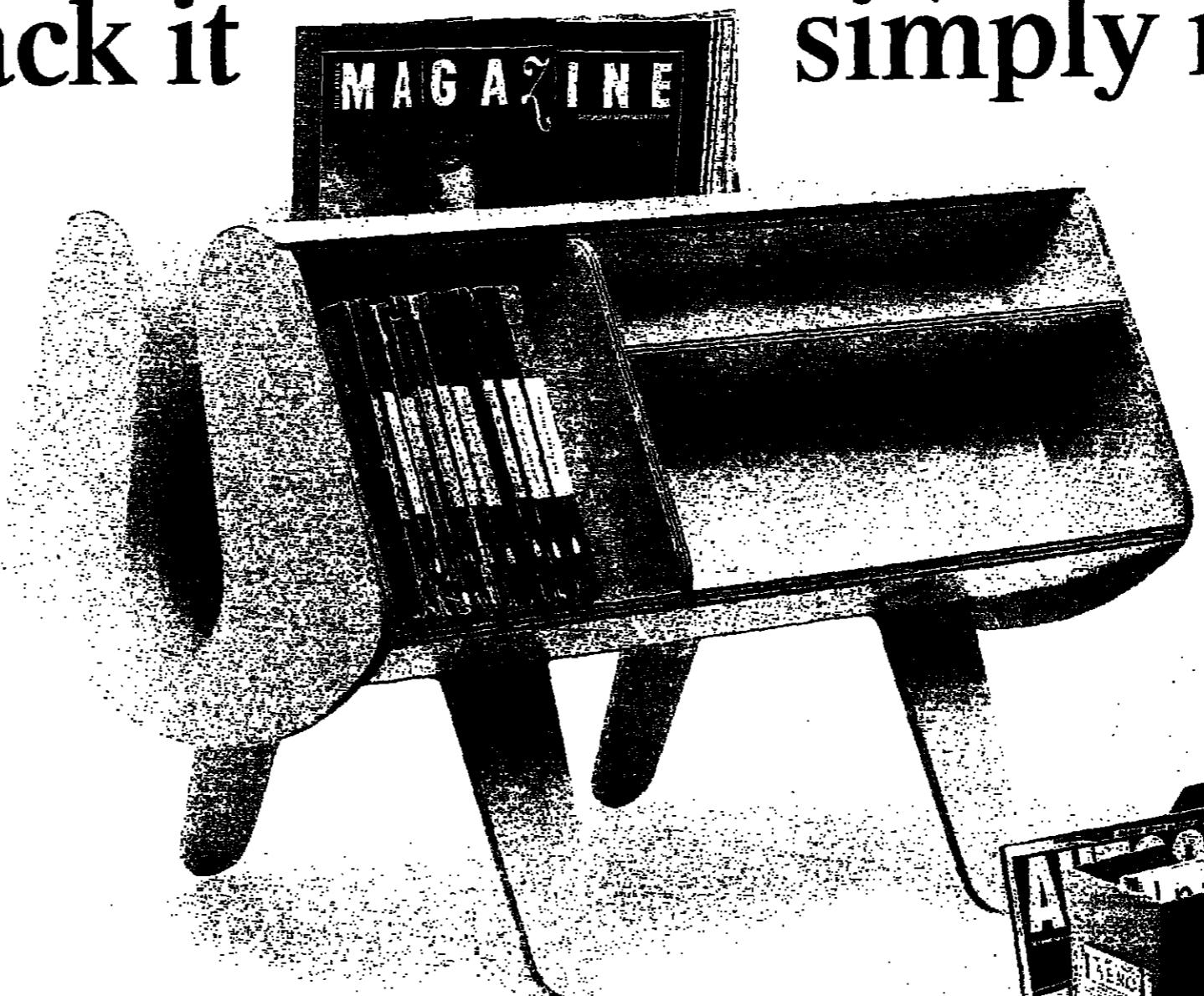
Sue Parker



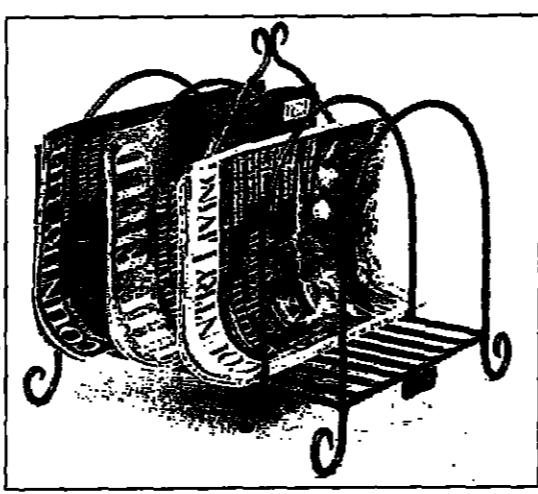
ABOVE: Minimalist chrome Forest magazine holder, £30, from Wireworks (0171-724 8956)



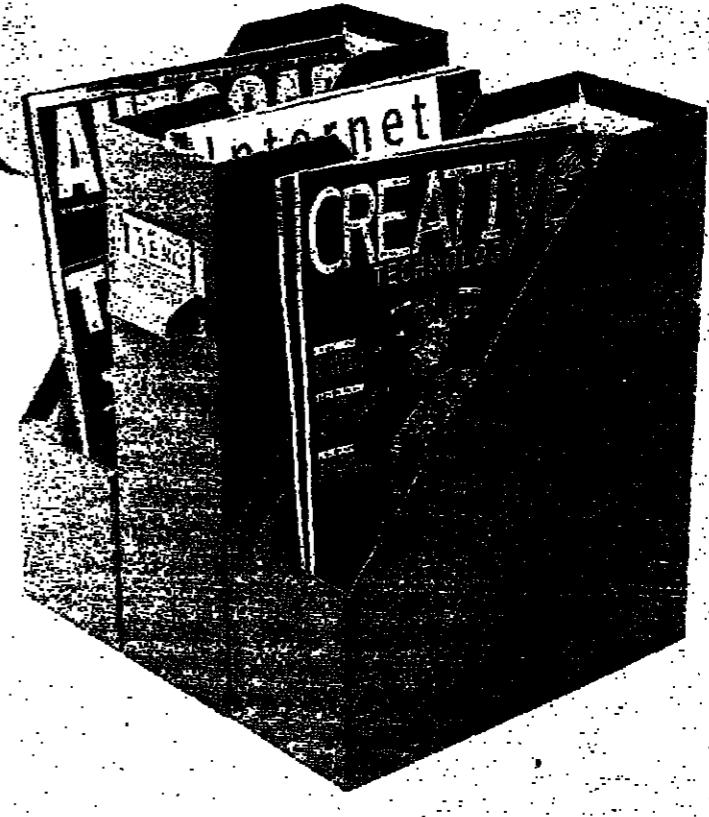
RIGHT: Original 1950s magazine rack, £12, from Flying Duck Enterprises, 320-322 Creek Road, Greenwich, London SW10 (0181-858 1964)



ABOVE: Oval wire basket, £7.50, from Source, 26-40 Kensington High Street, London W8 (0171-937 2626)



ABOVE: The Isokon Penguin donkey in birch ply, designed by Egon Riss in 1939, which holds books and magazines, £276, from Coexistence, 288 Upper Street, London N1 (0171-354 8817)



LEFT: Wrought iron toast-rack style magazine holder, £34.95 plus £5 p&p, from Bomby Duck mail order (0181-964 8882)



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TT 18/1/87

"This glass cage must be hell for a man of ambition"

Continued from page 1
spaces, hotels or boardrooms (glimpsed on our explorations of the City). And that is as it should be: because the penthouse is the headquarters of a public company, Jeffrey Archer, his works and thoughts. You can't sit here doing the crossword, clipping your nails, or scoffing a TV dinner. You are perpetually confronted by the unrelenting buzz of London, the challenge of all those centres of power and influence — the indifferent, remorseless river.

This glass cage, whatever the indulgence of the toys on the table, the mirrors and the golden birds, must be hell for a man of ambition and unflagging energy who has been excluded from the inner councils of government.

To be the first clown in the land, warm-up act, cheerleader, must be an act of peculiar generosity and well-disguised bitterness. To be left with the surrogate drama of prose — which, with each successive book, more and more material used up, becomes a harder labour. The brutal exposure of inadequacy that is any long-term literary career. Choosing the art that will promote your own special quality of discernment (and also express, by analogue, your personality in the form of a pictorial autobiography of developing taste) demands specialised help: investment brokers, fabric designers, style consultants. You always end up — because, after all, you are the one who is footing the bill — with much more stuff than any one life can reasonably afford. Which Miro for the staircase? Which Picasso dove shall hang en route to the lavatory? Which Lowry should signal the common touch?

I took out my notebook and began, like a baillif, to list the art works: two Lowrys down at the east end (art for those who don't like art, those who are endowed with a healthy measure of English cynicism — the visual equivalent of Philip Larkin). A weary and

pornography of the tycoon evolves towards institutional benevolence: departments of research and education, sponsorship facilitators, career aesthetes, well-bred diplomats schooled to talk money. Archer's collection is still in the primitive stage. It will be left, so it is understood, when the time comes — and after his son William, the art historian, has taken his pick — to Archer's old Oxford college. Brasenose.

All museums, libraries and galleries should be banned to Oxford. Let them be for the exclusive use of those who will walk there. London should be left to the cut-purse brigands, hustlers, gamblers, couriers, actors, whores, and other creatures of business. It's speedy, crazed, murderous — but never speedy enough. There are too many artificial Deep England villages, too many smoke-free zones, too much repressive hypocrisy. Museums have got above themselves, touring for funds, when they should remember their origins as mere cabinets of curiosities. Boxes of trinkets, bits of animal skin, fossils, plant freaks, blood cargo. You can't make this pilgrimage respectable by enclosing it in a fancy public building — with an outhouse for the sale of postcards and embossed pencils.

Lord Archer understood this; he would scavenge, bargain with gallery owners, play the market. (He also had postcards made of the prime items in his collection. But these were for promotion not for retail.)

I took out my notebook and began, like a baillif, to list the art works: two Lowrys down at the east end (art for those who don't like art, those who are endowed with a healthy measure of English cynicism — the visual equivalent of Philip Larkin). A weary and

bloodless elitism disguised by technical competence. A 1958 seascape with jetties and triperts like burnt out matchends. A steep flight of steps from 1961. Both genuine, I would say. Casually modest, with plenty to be modest about.

To the right of this pair, in a position of prominence, is a much noisier affair: a Vuillard, a family group. An acquired set, not Archer's own family — although the woman, it can't be denied, has something of the hauteur of Mary Archer. Painterly virtues, colour harmonies, balance and composition remove this piece from the genre that comes to mind: the reworked Polaroid.

Moving down the passage

that leads to the stairs and the private sleeping quarters, you glide along the inevitable anthology of political cartoons. There is the exhibition, beloved by politicians, of a

demonstrable sense of humour.

But Archer's originals are more subtle than that, among the best of their kind: Vicki and Peter Brookes, as well as Steadman and Scarfe, E.H. Shepard, Max Beerbohm.

Sisley's works mirrored in the columns of art books gleaming on the low glass tables. Small sculptures that I fail to identify, examples of the almost familiar: Anderegg things that aren't by Giacometti.

Like a blindfold raid by Imelda Marcos on the Royal Academy Summer Show, the collection is driven but wildly eclectic — betraying no psychological profile, no theme, no composition. It is as anonymous as shop stock, an exhibition curated by a squabbly financial adviser.

We climb the marble stairs to the upper gallery, where the personal assistant is working at the keyboard and fielding telephone calls: "Just make the cheque out to Lord Archer. He'll see it gets to the right place."

The low ceiling (with telltale damp patch), the wood, the rails, the light from the river



DAVID GAMBLE/SYGMA

this is a purser's office on a cruise liner. No lightweight furniture. Everything bolted in its place. Uncutted desk and built-in bookcases, with some small part of Jeffrey Archer's collection of first editions — all by one author, himself. I've never before seen paperbacks bound in silver books. Bright and shiny enough to satisfy the most fastidious of dealers. Is it possible to re-read an Archer?

"His" and "Hers" desks sit on either side of the stairwell, backed by a run of Radou Daya Thames river scenes, liquid blue strokes recalling the posters in the cafe-bar on the other side of the road. Miserable, evocative prompts.

The PA is struggling, ringing round her mates for advice — without success. She's been asked to book tickets for a show with a title she can't begin to pronounce; let alone feed into the spell check. *Get Gyan*. Having suffered through a misguided promotion at the Barbican, I'm reckless enough to help her out. To employ someone to take care of them for you must be the ultimate luxury. It goes with the cricket bat inscribed by the English Test team of 1992 to the best captain they never had, and the Max Ernst sculpture (bookend size, the W.G. Grace caricature, the re-joined Coke can, the rebounded set of Dickens' with gilt edges (books as furniture), the lamps and mirrors and framed photographs).

The PA was still busy on the phone — "Go to Harvey Nichols and you can't look at summer stuff — for under £2,000. Honestly, you need at least £50 for a T-shirt" — as we waved our farewells, semi-phoned our gratitude.

• Extracted from *Lights Out for the Territory*, by Ian Stedler, to be published by Granta Books at £12.99 on January 21.

Hair accessories are back, says Heath Brown, and there are sticks, combs and slides for every hairdo



LEFT: Zigzag stretch hairband, £2.95. Top: square cut-out gilt clip, £11.95, both Johnny Loves Rosie, Fenwicks, Bond Street, W1 (0171-629 9161). Below: flower clip, £4.99, Accessorize, branches nationwide (0171-313 3000). Back: gilt long-tooth comb, £2.95, Fenwicks

RIGHT: Burgundy velvet trellis hair band, £7.95; Top: small double-rose clip, £9.95, from a wide selection at Fenwicks, Bond Street, W1 (0171-629 9161). Below: rose hair stick, £12.50 each, Jackson, Whistles, 12 St Christopher's Place, W1 (0171-243 9900)

Get a head - get a hairband

Whether you have flowing locks or short-cropped hair, a woman's head will not be properly dressed without the obligatory hair accessory. Long hair can be twisted and secured into elegant chignons using butterfly clips or haircombs. Shorter cuts can be dressed up with decorative slides or barrettes.

Mary Flack, of Fenwicks of Bond Street, says that the

resurgence of hair ornaments began before Christmas and looks set to be in full swing by the summer. "Sticks, combs, clips and slides in all sorts of designs are a must-have," she says. "The biggest theme is floral."

Faux flowers attached to combs and clips are the perfect partner to the soft feminine frills, sheer and florals of this summer's clothes. Large fabric roses look dramatic, while

smaller rows of silk flowers are subtle and romantic.

The catwalks of Milan and Paris showed a large selection of floral hairwear for this spring and summer. Dolce & Gabbana showed large, cloth cabbage-roses teamed with its Chinese and flowered print outfits. Versace punctuated his show with sprigs of foliage clipped, pinned and skewered; and Valentino had orchid-effect additions to high frizzed

hairdos. Good examples to be found nationwide are from stockists of Johnny Loves Rosie (0171-435 0089), or look out for loose single fabric flowers from haberdashery departments to customize your look.

The tortoiseshell effect is another big look for more delicate slides and pins. Shorter hairstyles with just enough length to hold a slide look good with a few strips of tortoiseshell. It is also perfect for the beiges and browns of the moment and will work well with blonde, brunette and black hair.

The same goes for the gold accessories that are prevalent now. The shapes shown are modernist and abstract, with belt-buckle designs, matt bars and bubble motifs.

Beware of the cheap and tacky when choosing hair accessories," says the hairdresser Trevor Sorbie. "Go for the best quality, because cheaper accessories can damage the hair, causing it to break off. And always check that there are no sharp edges on combs or slides."

For thicker hair, Sorbie suggests using long-prong combs or one-prong pins. For finer hair it is better to use hair slides that lock into place. Styles should have a feeling of being loose and free while still being securely pinned.

Zigzag hair bands are the best way to keep a mass of over-unruly hair in place, but stay clear of solid hairbands and Alice bands in thick velvet or coloured plastic. Elastic hair "bubbles" are still around but avoid the "scrunchie".

The new dressed-up hair is feminine, subtle and sophisticated.

THREE OF A KIND

The short macintosh is a springtime essential. It is a handy coverall that evokes the romance of rainy days in Paris, with a twist of Audrey Hepburn 1950s chic. H.B.



FAR LEFT: Stone double-breasted mac, £138, from Jigsaw, 128 New Bond Street, W1, and selected branches nationwide (0171-491 4484). MIDDLE: Black waterproof gaberdine mac, £48.50, from the La Redoute catalogue (available from 0500 777777). LEFT: White nylon foldaway mac, £19.99, from the Empire catalogue (available from 0345 200400)



ABOVE: Tortoiseshell hair band, £9.99, Oasis, selected branches nationwide (0171-452 1000)

Before hair band: (left) circle clip, £3.99 (for two), Next, branches nationwide (0116-284 9424); (right) small clip, £9.95, both Miss Selfridge, branches nationwide (0181-910 1359)

Photographs by Richard Burns.
Hair and make-up by Sally Kvethelm.
Styling by Amandip Uppal.

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TT14

Where you can let your dream garden take seed

There are eight or more leading seed suppliers in Britain, each sending out seed catalogues, and you may be wondering how to choose between them. The differences are considerable.

To get the best, when buying seeds by mail order you need to be certain about what kind of plants you want and which are the specialist suppliers.

Different companies have different ranges. Unwins, for example, is known for its flowers, especially sweet peas; though it sells some vegetables, too. Marshalls, owned by the Unwins group, specialises in vegetables but sells the kind of flowers you might grow on an allotment for cutting or as bedding plants, and has increased its catalogues to two a year, to catch the autumn market. Suttons has a foot in both the flower and vegetable camps, with a few shrubs and perennials as well.

All the companies are keen to keep and increase their share of sales and, therefore, like to dabble in most areas of plant growing.

Unwins is keen to sell specialist bulbs but, because it is a sweet pea specialist, has already sent out an autumn catalogue to mailing-list customers who want to get their sweet pea seeds planted in winter.

Competition is fierce and seed companies are not on the sweetest terms. Most told me that their aim is to have about 100 new additions to the catalogue every year, which is good in that it brings in new varieties, but depressing in that many old favourites are all too often consigned to the scrap heap of fashion.

Seymour's Seeds, which introduces 100 new additions a year, claims to have the keenest prices, and emulates the John Lewis "never knowingly undersold" policy, so if a customer finds one of the company's items cheaper elsewhere, they will receive a free packet of seeds and a credit voucher to the value of the packet.

Many of the "new" varieties are bred by wholesale seed growers, who supply the seed-selling companies. Martin Thrower, the horticultural manager of Thompson & Morgan, which has a plant

If you want a beautiful summer or autumn garden, you'll need to order seeds now, says Stephen Anderton

MAIN SEED SUPPLIERS

■ Britain's largest seed companies include:

Seeds Direct & Sons, Broomhill Way, Torquay, Devon TQ2 7QW (0803 616585)

D.T. Brown & Co, Station Road, Padiham, Lancashire FY6 7JX (01253 882378)

W.W. Johnson & Sons, London Road, Buntingford, Bedfordshire MK1 2AD (0502 614223)

S.E. Marston & Co, Wigston, Leicestershire LE12 2EF (0116 353477)

Mr. Walker & Sons, Garsby, Sted, Kesteven, Lincolnshire, Sleaford, L18 7OB (01473 751160)

Seedsman & Sons, Admira 962, Farm Lane, Spalding, Lincolnshire PE11 1ED (01483 652701)

Suttons Seeds, Hale Road, Romsey, SO5 7QJ (01703 674455)

Thompson & Morgan, 1719, Yeoman Lane, Eastgate, Sutton, Surrey SM1 1ED (0171 655829)

Unwins Seeds, Mail Order Dept, Histon, Cambridge, CB4 4ZU (01945 588202)



Time to get your seeds now

■ Smaller suppliers include:

Chiltern Seeds, Bortree St., Ulverston, Cumbria LA22 7BP (01229 581137)

Plant World Botanic Gardens, Seed Dept (PFT), St. Marychurch Road, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ12 8SE (01803 872039)

■ Many of the smaller suppliers are listed in *The Plant Finder* (RHS, £11.99, ISBN 0 9012618 X), from all good booksellers.

offshoot in Guernsey, reckons that of its 100 new additions every year, 15 will be bred by themselves — which Mr Thrower claims is a high proportion within the industry — 35 by wholesale breeders and 50 by specialist growers, breeders and the biggest garden nurseries.

However, the time taken to develop a new variety is four to five years, so even 15 new plants a year means an important and costly research commitment.

To some gardeners here, the surprising fact is that behind the packing sheds of the British seed suppliers are no great fields embazoned in living colour: most seed is

grown abroad, in New Zealand, Africa, India and other parts of Europe, and in climates where two generations of seed can be grown in one year, a double cropping which keeps the development time of a variety down to four to five years.

Registration of new varieties takes time, too. "Flowers are easy," Mr Thrower says, "but vegetables are very, very slow." He cites EC rules as one of the reasons.

Despite all the problems, Unwins is now selling seeds over the counter in 21 countries, including every state in America, and in Russia, where flowers for drying are particularly popular.

Stephen Anderton has been recognised as the top newspaper writer for 1996 by the Garden Writers' Guild. It is the second year in succession that he has won the award.

Among the many seed catalogues, Thompson & Morgan's stands out as an exception. It offers flowers and vegetables but also a range of exotic trees, shrubs and houseplants. It is often the first port of call for eager gardeners wanting to grow something a little more unusual from seed.

The Thompson & Morgan catalogue is glossy and its distribution is immense in millions rather than hundreds of thousands, as with other seed suppliers. For 20 years Thompson & Morgan has distributed an American catalogue from its New Jersey office, which contains the same range of flowers as in the British catalogue but also a selection of vegetables specially adapted to American tastes and climates. All the plants offered are marked with a hardiness zone rating, a system which is generally used across America.

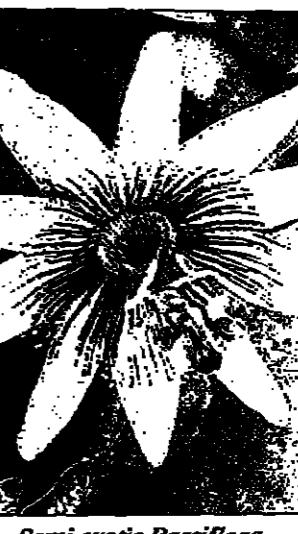
This winter sees the arrival of another Thompson & Morgan office in Arras, France, and a catalogue containing plants from the British catalogue.

In the Thompson & Morgan catalogue you can also find the latest fashionable darlings of the hardy plant world, such as the wonderful verdigris-blue *Cerithie major "Purpurascens"* (which seems to be much harder than the plain green form), alongside the regular stock-in-trade perennials, busy lizzies and geraniums.

But the catalogue also offers things such as baobab trees, magnolias, various edible passion flowers, and cycads.

If you are looking for something unusual to try, the best alternative to Thompson & Morgan, apart from the seed lists of specialist suppliers such as the Hardy Plant Society and Alpine Garden Society, is Chiltern Seeds, a small family firm in Cumbria. Its catalogue has no pictures, no glitz, but has at least 300 new additions every year.

Where else do you find 70 species of eucalyptus tree, 30 aquilegias, dozens of different cacti, 50 sweet peas (including the wild, heavily-perfumed *Lathyrus odoratus*), witch hazels, and the deceptively beautiful "murderous poisoner" *Boophis disticta*?



Hamamelis mollis
from Chiltern Seeds

Cerithie major "Purpurascens" from Thompson & Morgan

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Converted buyers see the light

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FOR SALE

CHURCHES AND CHAPELS

LONDON
4 The Banners, Cromwell Avenue, NS. First-floor apartment with wood floors in a converted United Reformed Church, off Highgate High Street. Two bedrooms with en suite bath and shower-room. 20ft reception room with stained glass windows, study area and kitchen-breakfast room. About £175,000 (Foxtons, 0171-433 8600).

LEICESTERSHIRE
The Old Chapel, Wyall Lane, Wymeswold. Converted Baptist chapel with gardens and gravestones. Four bedrooms, two bathrooms, living room (34ft x 36ft), with original arched, stained-glass Gothic windows and pulpit and kitchen. About £165,000 (Savills, Walker Walton, 0115 9552255).

HAMPSHIRE
The Old Church House, St Leonard, Beaulieu. Converted rural chapel, a mile from the Beaulieu River, with garden and views to the Isle of Wight. Three bedrooms, shower-room, bathroom, two reception rooms with original ceilings, Gothic arches, classical panelling and a former tomb-chapel and cloakroom. Garage. About £275,000 (John D Wood, 01590 677233).

CHERYL TAYLOR

Lack of quality houses for sale has put churches back in demand, says Cheryl Taylor

Church conversions became fashionable in the early 1980s when property developers and buyers, eager for something different, snapped up rundown churches going cheaply and turned them into colourful and unusual homes.

The Church of England and the Methodist Church soon realised there was money to be made from their redundant churches and chapels, and prices started to rise. It was common for a run-down church to fetch £500,000 to £1 million in central London in the late 1980s.

During the early 1990s, old church buildings had fallen out of vogue, mainly because of increased prices and the high cost of conversion. Now, agents report an increase in demand, largely because of a shortage of good quality houses for sale in many parts of the country.

Churches, usually located in the centre of towns and villages, are often interesting historical buildings, many with exposed beams, stone columns, arched Gothic windows and vaulted ceilings, and masses of light and space.

Most churches and chapels coming up for sale date from the Victorian period. Churches which are Grade I or Grade II* listed for their architectural merit are protected and cannot be converted or adapted.

Village chapels often have gardens and can make superb homes. Larger churches in inner cities are usually sold to property developers, who turn them into flats, often retaining architectural features, such as marble altars and stained-glass windows.

The Methodist Church has sold 7,000 chapels since 1982. It takes valuations and advice from local surveyors and advertises the property through estate agents. Nearly 100 chapels are said to be for sale around the country. The Church of England disposed of 1,453 churches between 1989 and 1996; about 166 of these were converted into homes. These days, however, the number of churches for sale has diminished.

Stuart Deacon, of the Church Commissioners, says: "Not every church building is suitable for conversion. A church which is away from other habitation might not be suitable for someone to live in; an

inner-city church might be more appropriate." The process of change to residential use involves public consultation, so the sale of a church can take several years. "Churches vary widely. Some churches in central London have sold for more than £1 million, others fetched negligible amounts," Mr Deacon says.

Two-thirds of the money raised after paying sale costs, including marketing expenses, goes towards funding the living Church, and one-third to the Church's Conservation Trust. Both the Methodists and the Church of England sell with restrictive covenants against use involving alcohol, sex shops, dance halls, amusements or gambling. The disturbance or removal of any grave, tombstone or memorial on the property is also prohibited.

Falling congregations and the high cost of maintaining old church buildings are the main reasons given by the Church of England for their disposal. The Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, says it

has opened more churches in England than it has closed since 1900.

Sometimes, a parish will sell off part of a church for conversion to fund renovation work on the rest of the building. The west end of the Church of St Saviour, in Walton Street, west London, is for sale at £1.7 million through Knight Frank, with outline planning consent for conversion to a 6,000 sq ft house. The rest of the church, with the chapel and altar, will continue to be used for worship.

The Raven Group of developers, with architects Mittelman Caradoc-Hodgkins, have designed a house for the west end of the Victorian-Gothic church, built in 1840 by George Bresciani. They plan to insert a sound-proofed wall dividing the church building in two.

Their design, which can be visualised via a computer model, incorporates a grand entrance hall with a sweeping staircase up to a gallery, three reception rooms, five bedrooms and a roof terrace overlooking Harrods. The price for the completed house is £2.7 million.

• Knight Frank, 0171-639 8711.

THE CHURCH DEVELOPER

GRAHAM MEEHAN, a property developer, has converted 20 redundant churches into more than 100 flats and houses in London and Bristol since the early 1980s.

His projects, mainly in north London, include the United Reform Church in Highgate, St Clement's in Islington, and St Stephen's in Ealing, west London.

Mr Meehan, who runs the development company Marcacore, paid £150,000 for his first church, the 18th-century United Reform Church in Highgate in 1982. He spent £600,000

converting the 10,000 sq ft building into 16 flats, which sold for £60,000 each for two bedrooms, mostly to young professionals. They are now worth about £175,000.

Neil Squires, a design consultant, who has worked with Mr Meehan since the early 1980s, says the trend in church conversions is for bigger, more expensive units. "Fifteen years ago, people tried to cram as many flats as possible into a church. Now,

the approach is to create a smaller number of larger, more upmarket homes," he says.

Their latest project, All Saints, Tytheron Road, Tufnell Park, is an example of the new generation of church conversions. The terrace of eight three and four-storey houses, within the 1820s church, each with its own landscaped garden, has almost sold out in less than a month.

TRADITIONALLY built with brick load-bearing walls, Bath stone dressings and slate roofs, the original building has exposed ceiling timbers, arched windows and stone columns. There are now 12ft-high ceilings, floors and doors in pitched pine and designer kitchens.

Prices of the two unsold houses are £260,000 for a 125-year lease on a three-bedroom house, and £295,000 for four bedrooms.

• Graham Meehan, 0171-491 3141, can also be contacted through the agent Strickley & Kent, 0171-267 2053.



Graham Meehan, a property developer, in one of the bedrooms of a home built inside the former All Saints Church in north London

EARLSFIELD ROAD, SW18 Freehold £400,000
Close to the west side of Wandsworth Common, a large semi-detached Victorian house set back from the road with off-street parking and a 27.5m (90ft) south facing garden. 5 beds, 2 baths, 2 recs, study, kit, conservatory, clerm, kettle.
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A south facing apartment of approx 280sqm (3,000 sq ft) in an historic house set in about 20 ha (50 acres) in an idyllic rural situation. Sympathetically restored, the apartments are of the highest quality with classical minimalist interiors, English oak floors, marble bathrooms, Czech & Speake fittings, German kitchen appliances and comprehensive security systems. The grounds are being restored to the original designs of Woods and Capability Brown.

COUNTRY LETTINGS: 01256 398004

EDWARDES SQUARE, W8 Freehold Price Guide £1,100,000
Facing west, a gracious end-of-terrace Georgian house with elegant, well-proportioned rooms and an artist's studio at the end of the garden. 5 beds, 2 baths, 3 recs, kitchen, utility rm, 2 clms, front and rear gardens; access to square gardens.
KENSINGTON: 0171-727 0705

WIMBLETON SW19
Well placed for Wimbleton BR and underground stations, an attractive semi-detached Victorian family house with a 12.2m (40ft) south west facing garden. 5 beds, bath, shower rm, recp, kitchen, clerm, cellar, front and rear gardens.
Freehold £325,000
WIMBLETON: 0181-944 7172

HAMPSHIRE Close to the southern edge of the New Forest. A country house with grazing land set in a rural position. 3 beds, 2 baths, 3 recs, kitchen, utility rm, 2 clms, garage, swimming pool. 3 houses, various outbuildings, garden & paddocks. About 2 ha (5 acres).
Price Guide £339,500
LYMINGTON: 01590 677233

When it's blossom time in Appledore

Set in the heart of a Kentish village, The Forstal's elegant rooms have a feel of the Mediterranean

It is hard to miss The Forstal in Appledore. Drive through the Kent village and it stands four-square in the middle of the high street directly opposite the Swan pub. The prominence of the Grade II five-bedroom house was part of its attraction when it was bought by Carmen De Haan, its Spanish owner.

"I wanted to live in an English village with a close community," says Mrs De Haan, who had been living in a 16th-century farmhouse on a 400-acre farm in Cranbrook before divorcing her English husband and moving in with their five children in 1984. "Despite the farm being so old and beautiful it was very isolated."

The Forstal was prominent and when I saw its red-stone courtyard at the back, the giant weeping willow and the wisteria, that was it."

The morning I went to see the house, the flatlands and weather-boards of Kent were heavy with wet snow. The garden and paddock (almost an acre) that Mrs De Haan euphemises were buried under six inches of Siberian-looking weather. I checked the scene from the open-fired dining room window and took the estate agent's glossy-brochure word for it.

After Mrs De Haan's first visit to the early Victorian red-brick house, she immediately put in an offer. The previous owner was a widow who had lived there for 50 years. The house had not been touched during her time.

"She hadn't done anything to it," Mrs De Haan says. "Imagine what it was like. There was only an Aga and a single sink in the kitchen. The central heating was terrible and the electrics were dangerous. She was very sad when she sold and regretted it terribly. She cried when she came back and wouldn't come inside."

Part of The Forstal dates from 1687 when it was a farmhouse and coach house on the road to London. The Forstal means "a farmyard in front of a house" which suggests its



The Forstal is Grade II listed with five bedrooms and stands in a prominent position in Appledore

HOUSE OF THE WEEK

The Forstal, Appledore, Kent

● **Price:** Offers at £550,000

● **Setting:** Ashford 15 mins away, London one hour by fast train from there. For schools, Benenden and Cranbrook not far away.

● **Shopping:** Smart antique shops and stores in Tenterden – or Paris, via Eurotunnel

● **Entertainment:** Golf at Tenterden. Walks on atmospheric Romney Marsh 10 mins away.

past position. Today's brick house was built between 1817 and 1840.

Mrs De Haan has done up the house twice, most recently four years ago. The floorboards were replaced, as were the chimney stacks. The hallway was enlarged to give it more presence. Today it is as handsome as you would expect for such a fine facade and classic wooden doorway. "The hall was a little narrow and mean so I took a



bit of the music room and made it look lovely. It feels right now. It's in proportion."

A tour of the children's five bedrooms on the first floor revealed that they were also all in proportion, large, poster-covered and sofaed, each felt like a sitting room.

Some of the new reception room colours are less than restrained which is the way Mrs De Haan, born in Malaga, likes it. "The



Mrs De Haan prepares food in the wooden-beamed kitchen and breakfast room (left) which reflects her Spanish ties as does the use of bold colours in the sitting room (above)

downstairs room colours are outrageous – the deep blues, reds and greens," she says. "They are really bold but the rooms are strong and you can get away with it. They look good and reflect my Spanish temperament."

A further Spanish twist is seen in the 12 Don Quixote glazed tiles which dance along the wall above the Aga in the wooden-beamed kitchen. They were there, inexplicably, when the De Haans moved in. "I couldn't believe it, it was such a coincidence," says Mrs De Haan. "They were in a straight line so I rearranged them into a zig-zag."

Today, with two children at university in London and three at Millfield boarding school, Mrs De Haan is looking to move back to Spain to be near her sister in Majorca. "Now that the children are growing up I am here complete-

ly on my own," she says. "I will look for a big old house in the hills of Majorca and also for a little place in Kent, maybe in Tenterden."

She will miss the beaches at St Mary's Bay, Dymchurch, Camber sands and Hythe. She will also miss the friendliness of village life and the walks along the Royal Military Canal which was built to repel a threat from Napoleon which did not materialise.

ALEX WIJERATNE
● Agent: Savills (0732 455551)

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More and more Britons are looking to the Caribbean islands as the ideal place to find a retirement or second home

Where to buy a slice of tropical paradise

JAMAICA was Noël Coward's favourite Caribbean island. He bought a home there. Firefly, high on a cliff on the island's northwest coast. It was there that he entertained British royalty and Hollywood VIPs, and he was buried in its garden in 1973.

The Caribbean has long been a popular destination for Britons. With regular direct flights from the UK to Barbados, Antigua and Jamaica, these British-oriented islands are the most popular for those seeking a retirement or second home in the Caribbean. They also attract the most property development.

JAMAICA

This is one of the largest of the Caribbean islands, and one of the most beautiful, with its lush mountains and white sand beaches, surrounded by a translucent blue sea. Foreign investment in property on the island is encouraged, but it is no tax haven.

At St Ann's Bay on the north coast, a new resort — including two international hotels and a 27-hole championship golf course — is being built on the 800-acre Drax Hall Estate. A 100-berth marina and a yacht club are planned.

Villa plots overlooking the golf course and the sea cost from £45,000 to £75,000 for a half-acre plot. A luxury three-bedroom house can be built for about £150,000, excluding the cost of the land.

Property transfer tax is paid by the vendor, at 7.5 per cent of the sale price. Buying costs are about 4 to 5 per cent of the purchase price. Larger, detached houses on the island, such as those at the Drax Hall Estate, can be let for £2,000 to £3,000 a week in the peak winter season. Rental returns are free of local taxes for the first seven years of ownership.

BARBADOS

This is the most sophisticated of the Caribbean islands — and the most expensive. An enviable climate and friendly population are the obvious attractions of an island swathed in sugar cane and blessed with some of the Caribbean's finest beaches.

The property market is relatively stable, although prices are rising as building land becomes scarce. You could buy a one-bedroom flat there for under £100,000, but most homes cost a great deal more. Houses costing more than £1 million are common at Sandy Bay and St James on the island's wealthy west coast, an area scattered with golf courses and expensive hotels.

Barbados has a new leisure home development, the Royal Westmoreland, which has been created on 480 acres of former sugar plantation. In the hills above St James, the British-owned development includes 350 luxury houses around an 18-hole golf course, designed by Robert Trent



The Royal Westmoreland development, Barbados, has 350 luxury houses and an 18-hole golf course built on a former sugar plantation, with prices from £250,000

Jones Jr. Sixty houses with views over the golf course have been built and sold, mainly to British buyers.

"Most of our purchasers are buying with a view to retirement. The average age is 55. Some are looking to retire here, others will spend the winter in their property. Most buy for the sports facilities and the outdoor life," says Julian Rooney, the managing director.

The former tennis star Virginia Wade recently paid £30,000 for a

two-bedroom house here. Other famous owners at Royal Westmoreland include David Lloyd and Ian Woosnam, who spent £1.3 million last year on a five-bedroom villa overlooking the 18th fairway.

Prices start at £250,000, which buys a two-bedroom villa close to the clubhouse, with sun terraces and sea views. The detached courtyard villas, costing from £450,000, have three bedrooms, marble floors, coral stone walls, a private pool and landscaped gardens.

There are also a few larger, two-storey colonial-style houses in half an acre. Built around leafy inner courtyards, with up to five bedrooms and a guest cottage, these cost from £70,000 to more than £1 million.

On-site facilities include a tennis centre and a large leisure complex, with swimming pools, spa bath, a gymnasium and a health clinic.

There is no capital gains tax to pay on any profits when you sell your Barbadian home. There is a property transfer tax of 10 per cent of the purchase price incurred on buying and 8 per cent on selling, plus stamp duty and lawyers' fees of about 2 per cent. However, because of a Government concession, property tax is not levied on the sale or purchase of property at Royal Westmoreland.

ANTIGUA

This is the largest of the Leeward Islands, has a dry climate and an arid landscape, scattered with forts and anchorages, including English

Harbour, where Nelson once sheltered the British Fleet.

During the 1980s the island, with its 365 beaches, flanked by palm trees and turquoise seas, was at the hub of the Caribbean's building boom. Following the world recession, the property market slumped,

leaving a glut of newly built homes.

Some of the island's best value property is at the new Jolly Harbour Marina on the west coast, near the capital, St John's. More than 500 waterfront homes have been built by the Swiss developer Alfred Ehrhart along side canals or open waterways. Prices range from £76,000 to £96,000 for an air-conditioned two-storey, two-bedroom terraced house, with private mooring.

There are also a few prime beachfront plots available for villas built to individual specification, priced from £125,000.

A three-bedroom villa with three bathrooms, garage and marina berth can be built for £340,000, including the cost of the land, says Simon Malster of agent Investors in Property.

The 500-acre development has a

shopping centre and a sports complex with tennis, squash and

swimming pool, two beaches and an 18-hole golf course.

On the south coast of Antigua is St James's Club, once owned by the entrepreneur Peter de Savary. John German, of agent Cluttons, is asking £422,000 for Ronaldshay Villa, a luxury three-bedroom

house with three bathrooms, set high on St James's Hill with panoramic views. It comes with a cooling verandah to let the breeze waft through the high-ceilinged rooms, an acre of tropical gardens and its own swimming pool.

Service charges at the St James's Club are around £5,000 a year. Letting your home will help offset running costs. Typically, a large detached villa

at the St James's Club will fetch £3,000 a week in rental income in the winter months.

There is no income tax or capital gains tax to pay on Antigua. Allow about 5 per cent of the purchase price to cover stamp duty and legal fees.

TURKS & CAICOS

The English-speaking island of Providenciales, the largest of the Turks & Caicos Islands, is famous for its beaches and clear water. It

offers good scuba diving and fishing, year-round sunshine and all the advantages of a tax haven.

One of the few remaining British Crown Colonies at the southern end of the Bahamas chain, the island can be reached in 90 minutes by plane from Miami, or direct from Milan.

Richmond Hill Estates is selling villa plots at Grace Bay Hills, close to the island's 18-hole championship golf course, from £13,333 to £56,000 for a third of an acre. There is also a range of three and four-bedroom villas available at Turtle Bay Cove, priced from £176,000. Houses on the beach are more expensive. Expect to pay at least £650,000 for a three or four-bedroom house, with maid's quarters, private pool and exotic landscaped gardens. Cluttons is the British agent.

There are also uninhabited outer islands for sale in whole or part. Raw land starts at £50,000 an acre. Some of the islands have underground springs and wells, others will need desalination plants.

Those contemplating a move to a Caribbean island might also consider renting a home. A three-bedroom place a short distance from the beach can be rented from £1,300 a month for a year.

CHERYL TAYLOR

• Drax Hall Estate, 01809 972 2438 (Jamaica); Investors in Property, 0191-405 5511 (Antigua); Royal Westmoreland, 0171-355 5028 (Barbados); Cluttons, 071-908 1010 (Antigua and Providenciales).

PROPERTY NEWS

■ TWO OF only five Lutyens-built townhouses in London are for sale as one residence. Extending to some 40 rooms in total, the houses in Great Peter Street, SW1, were built for the Honourable Francis McLaren MP and his sister, Lady Norman, in 1911. They were most recently used as the headquarters of the Rural Development Commission. The asking price is about £5.25 million. Contact Knight Frank (0171-824 8171) or King Sturge & Co (0171-493 4933).

■ THE provisions of the 1990 Housing Act will come into force on February 28. All new tenancies will automatically be Assured Shorthold Tenancies, unless rents are more than £25,000 per year. Landlords will be able to repossess properties after a tenant has defaulted on two months' rent, instead of three, and also to evict tenants for anti-social behaviour.

■ THE sales office for the one and two-bedroom luxury apartments being built by Chelsea Village, plc, in the grounds of Chelsea Football Club in southwest London, opened this week. The apartments should be finished this summer, and will include underground parking. Prices from £155,000 to £220,000. Contact Savills (0171-355 2400).

■ THE strengthening of the pound has stimulated demand for property overseas, according to Hampton International. Meanwhile, prices on the Continent have remained stagnant. David King of Hamptons says: "From a low point of about F17.5 to the pound, we are now looking at F19, making French property substantially better value to purchase."

AMANDA LOOSE



The Jolly Harbour Marina, Antigua, has two-bedroom terraced houses from £76,000 to £96,000

EXCLUSIVE COMPETITION THE TIMES

Three cases of 10 year old whisky to be won

Today *The Times* brings you the opportunity to buy tickets for one of the most important events in the world of bridge, The Macallan International Bridge Pairs Championship, and the chance to win a superb case of The Macallan whisky.

There are three first prizes, each consisting of 12 bottles of The Macallan 10 Year Old malt whisky, worth approximately £260 a case.

There are also 40 runners-up prizes of Macallan playing cards and miniature bottles of The Macallan 10 Year Old.

The Macallan International Bridge Pairs Championship is regarded by many as the most prestigious event in the bridge calendar and the one which all players most aspire to win.

Now in its 26th year, the championship will be held next Wednesday, Thursday and Friday at the White House Hotel, Albany Street, London. Thirty-two of the world's top names will be playing, including bridge's most famous player, Omar Sharif. Last year's winners were Eric Rodwell and Jeff Meckstroth from America.

In addition to the title itself and prize money totalling £10,000, competitors will be playing for the championship trophy and a case each of The Macallan which is renowned for its full-bodied flavour and distinctively mellow taste.



HOW TO ENTER
Call the hotline number below to book your tickets quoting *The Times*. You will automatically be entered into a free prize draw. If you already have tickets, you can enter the draw by ringing the hotline and leaving your name and address.

The Macallan International Bridge Pairs Championship will be held at The White House Hotel, Albany Street, London NW1.

Dates of the tournament are: January 22-23-24.

Prices are as follows:

To attend all sessions: £25 Wednesday, 5.30pm-11pm: £12.50 Thursday, 12noon-4pm: £12.50; 5.30pm-1pm: £12.50

All Day Thursday £20

Friday, 1pm-6pm £17.50

Tickets to be collected from the box office at the White House Hotel.

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CHANGING TIMES

SELLING POINTS

FITTED KITCHEN

For some people, choosing a fitted kitchen can rank with those other high-stress events of getting married or moving house.

Whereas once you might have impressed the neighbours with a bank of snuggly fitting units, today everyone has them, and people expect to find a better kitchen than theirs when they move house.

Bearing in mind that most people refit the kitchen only about every ten years, selecting from the ever-expanding range of materials, colours and styles is taxing. Should you opt for a traditional look or country cottage? High-tech or maybe stainless steel for an industrial feel?

And if you go for one of today's favourite styles, such as the cool-colour Shaker look, will it become *passé*? Will the fad for hanging your chairs on the wall have worn off in five years' time when you may want to sell?

Although the choice of kitchen is highly personal, there are styles that are widely popular and less likely to date. Traditional and country cottage kitchens in pine and oak are perennial favourites, say retailers, while at the higher priced end of the market, the hand-painted look also has a long-lasting appeal, say companies such as Smallbone of Devizes.

If you are selling your house it is not just the style and colour of the cupboards that will catch the eye of potential buyers, or whether you have any of those fiendishly clever little units that swivel out to become ironing

boards and dining tables.

Quality brand name electrical appliances are just as important. But a cheap oven thrown in as part of a special offer package is unlikely to impress.

Fitted kitchens may now be expected as standard by househunters but, say some estate agents, a new kitchen with up-to-the-minute appliances will top up your property's asking price.

If you want to ensure you are ahead of the field in your choice of kitchen, you should opt for more colour variants and paint finishes, such as the antique or distressed look.

which are tipped as the coming thing.

Magnat, for example, is soon to launch a home-painting service so that its customers can have exactly the effect they desire. The company has also introduced kitchen styles with interchangeable colour panels, so that you can ring the changes.

An average spend on a kitchen at a high street or DIY store, such as Homebase, is £2,000 to £4,000, plus about £1,000 for installation. The price of a hand-painted Smallbone kitchen starts at about £7,500.

Among other kitchen companies, the unfitted look is the way forward, provided you have a large enough space. Dressers, island units with chopping boards, and a ceiling rack for your pans and



Will the fad for Shaker-style fitted kitchens have worn off when you come to sell?

bunches of dried flowers, can be used to give a more individual touch to your kitchen.

However, the stainless steel and high-tech styles are likely to remain more for city dwellers and the Shaker look may peak but is here to stay, say retailers.

An average spend on a kitchen at a high street or DIY store, such as Homebase, is £2,000 to £4,000, plus about £1,000 for installation. The price of a hand-painted Smallbone kitchen starts at about £7,500.

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When a bird in the hand is worth £100,000

Keeping pigeons has outgrown its cloth-cap image

Every day in summer Molly Holt spends time at her cabin on an allotment next to her pigeon lofts. "I go there at six in the morning and come home at seven at night. It's idyllic," she says. "A little haven where I can be with the pigeons, watch them flying around and listen to their cooing. They are therapeutic."

Ms Holt, of Wakefield, West Yorkshire, is one of about 80,000 pigeon racing enthusiasts, many of whom will be flocking to Blackpool this weekend for the 25th British Homing World Show of the Year at the Winter Gardens.

But what is that inspires someone to keep pigeons?

Ms Holt discovered the joys of keeping pigeons ten years ago. "I used to be scared of them, but a friend kept pigeons and his interest transferred to me. And once you have got the bug it's hard to get away from it," she says.

Ms Holt, or Red Hen as she is known to many of Britain's 80,000 pigeon racing enthusiasts, keeps 50 birds of varying breeds, including the racing varieties: Herman, Busschaert and Verheyen. She also keeps a few fantails, a breed that many people have for their appearance rather than racing ability.

All Ms Holt's birds have their own nest boxes, in a number of homemade lofts (a new loft measuring 15ft x 6ft, which could hold up to 80 pigeons, would cost about £100-£300).

During the racing season, from April to September, she spends more than £10 a week on them, which includes food — maize, tic beans, maple peas and wheat — and the fee for each bird she enters in a race (last year it cost 47p per pigeon). Each bird is also vaccinated against paramyxo virus, a disease that can leave the pigeons debilitated.

Ms Holt's birds all have a name. Her favourite is Conqueror, because he has raced so well. Another bird originally called Ayatil ("I hate it")



Molly Holt, known to many of Britain's 80,000 pigeon racing enthusiasts as Red Hen, with one of the 50 birds at her lofts in Wakefield, West Yorkshire. "They're therapeutic," she says.

because of his stubbornness, had a name change when he won a race. He is now Alvit.

She has never bought any pigeons; she has either been given pigeons or bred them.

The prices normally range from £10 to more than £100.00 for a good racing pigeon.

Ms Holt says that pigeon magazines carry advertisements selling them and clubs often hold pigeon auctions.

This month is breeding time in Ms Holt's lofts. "I put the cock and hen together and

about seven or eight days later the female will lay an egg. They make very good parents and can stay together for life. They take turns to sit on the egg. Eighteen to 20 days after laying, the egg hatches.

The baby is called a squeaker, and its initial diet is pigeon's "milk", which is feed the parents have eaten and then regurgitated. Ms Holt says. Five or six days after birth she puts a registration

ring on the squeaker's right foot so that it can be identified for the rest of its life. Pigeons normally live for about 14-15 years but can go on past 20.

At one month old, she takes the bird from its parents and a couple of weeks later starts training it for racing. At first, the pigeon is taken a few hundred yards from the loft, but gradually the distance is built up. Her birds start racing from six months old and can go on until they are nine years old.

Distances covered in races

vary from 50 to 200 miles. "Nobody really knows what brings them home. That is what is so fascinating about the sport," Ms Holt says.

Paul Smith, a pigeon consultant, got the bug for keeping pigeons when he was eight years old. His father and grandfather both raced them.

The birds were in an old shed at the bottom of the garden. I used to sit for hours with them," he says.

Mr Smith kept pigeons as pets for about four years before starting to race them. As his passion for them grew he became both a racer and a breeder, and has also entered them at shows.

There will also be about 160 trade stands selling anything from feed to racing clocks.

In two weeks, four of Mr Smith's pigeons will be taking

on hundreds of others from all over the world in a 375-mile, \$1 million race from Gariep Dam, near Colesberg, north to Sun City — somewhat dispelling the cloth-cap image of pigeon keeping.

In Blackpool this weekend, nearly 2,500 pigeons will be exhibited in 33 showing classes, including young and old pigeons, racing pigeons and cocks and hens. The judges look for alert eyes, shape of head, good feather condition and size and stance of the body.

There will also be about 160 trade stands selling anything from feed to racing clocks.

Mr Smith has been going to the show since it began 25 years ago. "It is a great

opportunity for fanciers to buy whatever they need and it's a wonderful introduction for those who have never been involved in keeping pigeons," he says.

CHRISTIAN DYMOND

• British Homing World Show of the Year, Winter Gardens, Blackpool, Today 9am-5pm and tomorrow 9am-3pm. £2.50, children and OAPs £1.

• Royal Pigeon Racing Association, 01452 713555.

• Paul Smith (Regency Lodge), 0129 657519.

• Publications: British Homing World (weekly) £2.25; Pigeon Racing Gazette (monthly) £1.32; Racing Pigeon (monthly) £1.95; Racing Pigeon Pictorial (monthly) £1.95.

A VET WRITES

Q Our cat is two years old and, since a kitten has vomited undigested food about once a month. He does not look ill. Please comment.

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Q We have five guinea pigs — grumpy, father, mother and two youngsters. From time to time one or other develops an intense itch, caused by a mite. Bathing in medicated shampoo helps and we disinfect their pens regularly, but cannot get rid of the parasite. Any ideas?

A Guinea pigs are plagued by the mite *Trichomys caviae*, which is often present on healthy youngsters without causing any skin problems. If they become unwell for any reason — or when pregnancy and birth put extra stress on a female cavy — the mite population increases and the itch starts, and sometimes causes a serious loss of weight. Medicated baths and a thorough cleaning of the cages will control the mites, but a few are left behind. A relatively new treatment involves injecting a parasiticide which is excreted through the skin and reaches parts other shampoo may not.

Q Glendower, our Pembroke corgi, sleeps on his back, four legs in the air. Why does he choose this position? Comfort or display?

A A one-word explanation might be convenient. When the sole part of his abdomen is exposed he is demonstrating confidence while in a vulnerable position. It's an efficient "heat-loss" posture, too. He is exposing as much surface area as possible to allow body heat to disperse.

JAMES ALLCOCK

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It may seem trivial when compared to other people's misfortunes, but I am in a quandary — I have nobody to leave my money to.

This was brought home recently when I was asked to nominate three people who would get my death-in-service benefit after I die, thereby bestowing four times my annual salary on whoever I might suggest.

And then there is my house, the collection of dolls' houses and the Jack Russell terrier, who is beyond price.

Three of my cousins died in accidents in their twenties and the newspapers are full of people who fall off mountains, are electrocuted by the lawn mower or meet other untimely ends. So it seemed sensible, therefore, not to put it off any longer, but to make a will and not to leave my loved ones squabbling over my estate.

As I have no children, the obvious choice for a legacy would be the man in my life, but since we tend to go everywhere together and his driving rather calls to mind making a will, it would seem much more sensible to have a Plan B.

Where there's a will, they want be in it

PERSONAL LIFE

It is Plan B that is the problem. It is not that I do not have any relatives — being half-Irish I have droves of them — but who is the most deserving?

I made a list of nieces (five) and nephews (three) and other young relations, but then started crossing out those who had failed to fit my inheritance guidelines. The imperious ones were the first to go. The men also went through the nieces who sneered at my collection of dolls' houses ("but what are they for?"), the niece who refused to turn her music down ("you're just old") and the nephew who said books were boring.

Another line went through the young relative, an otherwise lovely girl, who recently received a police caution for smoking what my father insists on calling "merry-jew-arm". What she obviously needs is less money, not more, since we now know what she spends it on.

Then I came to a young niece I

was particularly fond of, realised I had not spoken to her for a while and rang to ask if she had liked her Christmas present.

"Oh yah, lovely, thank you Auntie Mary." There was a pause. Then she said: "What was it?"

She had received a car from her mother and a mobile telephone from her father and my carefully chosen gift must have seemed paltry by comparison. The best thing for her is not a large bequest, but a good slapping and the sooner the better.

His gravestone inscription said "killed in action" and since he was running for a consignment of Red Cross doughnuts, I suppose there was some truth in it.

Being Irish, a nurse and a believer, my mother has no fear of death and often talks about "when I'm gone", usually while she is sitting by the fire smoking her pipe.

I tell her not to worry because only the good die young. She has talked about her own will for so long that it has become a family joke ("let's grease the stairs to night", etc). The will is also changed on a regular basis, my sisters and I fighting through it from time to time according to the suitability of our boyfriends. I have had more comebacks than Gary Gilster.

This will neurosis has been

passed on. My eldest sister keeps hers on the bedside table, making it easily accessible and soon altered should anyone offend her.

She spends a fortune at the solicitor's. She is also a great housekeeper — gets divorced, keeps the house — so she won't be needing anything from me.

At the moment, if I die

without a will, my earthly goods will automatically go (via the taxman) to my parents and, charming though they are, they have a large house and do not need the money. Thanks to compulsory sport and a decent private education, my four siblings are in the same position.

So what are we left with?

Charity, I suppose. I dug out a table of charities that benefit from wills. The last annual count ran thus: the RNLI (£38 million); Imperial Cancer Research (£32

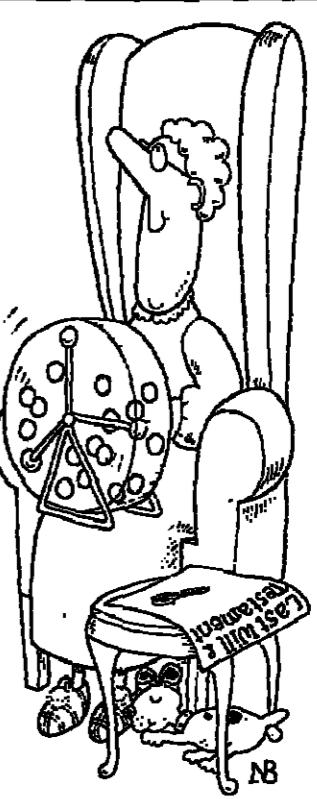
million); the Cancer Research Campaign (£32 million); the National Trust (£24 million) and the RSPCA (£23 million). Now, these are fine organisations, but I balk at the thought of my money disappearing into a large pot with lots of other people's.

I cannot leave it to Jumble (the Jack Russell) because I am against leaving money to individual animals and, as she only eats 50p worth of food a day, the money would long outlast her.

So what I really want is for someone, some day, to think of me and say, "Good old Auntie Mary, she helped me get to Cambridge, play the piano, made me what I am today, etc".

Ideally that someone should be a Jack Russell fan who likes dolls' houses. Applications should reach me before the appointment with Raymond Harris, my solicitor, on January 29.

MARY GOLD



What shall we do with mother?

The choice of who should care for an elderly parent is fraught with guilt, says Jill Parkin

The world was different in Eileen House's day. Home was a place where there was a woman looking after a husband, children and maybe an old parent, too. Increasingly today, those parents are in another sort of home. More than half a million of our old people are in long-stay care. Only a quarter of them have any say in a decision which is often fraught with guilt for their grown-up children.

Mrs House is 80. She looked after her widowed father at home for seven years, she moved house to help bring up some of her grandchildren, and she nursed her sick husband until she had to go to hospital herself. He died in a residential home three weeks after she became a long-stay resident in a nursing home.

"I always vowed I wouldn't be a burden on my children," she says. She came to Purley View Nursing Home in Purley, south London, in March last year. Her daughter, Geraldine Marsh, chose it.

"My house just isn't suitable for her disability. I've got steps, steps, steps. Mum can't be alone for very long, and she needs nursing," says Mrs Marsh. "Life is a struggle. If I didn't work we wouldn't be in very good shape. We have a two-bedroom house and my son lives at home."

They are a mother and daughter of our time — full of concern for each other, seeing each other a lot, but living in different worlds. As usually happens, the decision was taken at a moment of crisis: Mrs House was in hospital after a series of falls and a stroke. After discussion with her sisters, Mrs Marsh began to search for a suitable home.

She did a thorough job, seeing ten homes within visiting reach, and she chose well, but there is still a note of justification in her voice when she talks about the "steps, steps, steps". The guilt factor has grown almost as fast as the care industry which looks after our old people.

Jean Lewis of the Elderly Accommodation Council, an information service for old people, says: "Relatives should remember that although the older person may not feel very happy at the idea, in nine out of ten cases, if one chooses the right home, within a few months they are happier than they have been for ages. In a good home, they get companionship, cooking and cossing. People really should not feel guilty. It's a bit like sending children to boarding school. They cry their eyes out when they go but by half-term they don't want to leave."

With Mrs House and her daughter there was no acrimony, but often the very subject is taboo, says Mrs Lewis. "Broaching such a move seems to cause almost as much embarrassment as discussing the possibility of a death in the family. The younger people will not bring the matter up for fear of upsetting their elders. And the older people will not admit that they cannot cope."

More and more families are having to broach the subject and make the decision. According to Lang and Buisson, healthcare market analysts, we now have 1,090,000 people aged over 85, compared with 472,000 in 1971. We have half a million old people in long-stay care, compared to 270,000 in 1970. We no longer all live near our parents.

Caring for elderly parents in



Eileen House and her daughter Geraldine Marsh in Purley View Nursing Home. "I vowed I wouldn't be a burden on my children," says Mrs House

the family has not completely died out, though it may not always go all the way to the grave.

Nigel and Angela Best now live in her mother Betty's house in West Sussex. Mr Best, a builder, has turned a detached garage into a granny annexe with alarms and intercom in case Betty, 75, has a fall.

"It has worked well for all of us," says Mrs Best, who is at home with two small children. "My mother had a stroke and was seriously considering selling up to buy sheltered accommodation. This house was far too big for her. We'd just had another baby and needed more space but couldn't afford it. My mother has helped us out and we're here for her. I don't know what will happen in the future, but I'm going to be at home until the younger child is at school, so the

arrangement should last a few years."

Peter and Clare Dobbs, who live a few miles away, are wondering if their similar arrangement may be coming to an end. They bought a large vicarage jointly with Mr Dobbs' parents, who lived in one part of it. "It meant they saw their grandchildren growing up, we knew they were okay, and we had babysitters, as well as a lovely house with a big garden for a relatively small mortgage," he says.

Then his mother died and his father, who is 81, has gradually deteriorated well beyond the babysitting point. "We used to have a rule," says Mrs Dobbs, "that it was two independent households coming and going as they pleased. It's different now."

She, as the one who works from home, now shops for her

father-in-law and takes a hot meal in to him once a day. She does his washing and pays her cleaner for an extra hour a week to do his rooms.

"He has become our responsibility," she says. "From the point of view of his welfare the arrangement is still a good one. I can't imagine that he would ever leave us for a residential home."

Long-stay care need not mean the end of family care, according to Jenny Sules, the director of the Relatives Association, a charity for people with relatives in long-stay care. She says those running homes can help by making relatives feel more welcome.

"Now she can get off the bus coming from work, see me, and get on the bus to go home. She comes twice a week. She was coming every day, but I stopped her because she was getting so worn out."

Long-stay care need not mean the end of family care, according to Jenny Sules, the director of the Relatives Association, a charity for people with relatives in long-stay care. She says those running homes can help by making relatives feel more welcome.

"Many relatives feel they have failed the resident when they give up personal caring, even if no other course was possible," she says. "Often they have very mixed emotions: they want the home to look after the person, but they don't want to be cut out completely."

"Coming to a nursing home

wasn't what I wanted: I'd never thought about it," says Mrs House. "But Geraldine made sure I came to a good one. When the other residents go, I miss them. They are like an extended family, the people I stop to chat to on my way to and from my room."

The world has changed. An extended family was once children, parents and grandparents. Now it is the care industry as well.

• *The Relatives Association (0171-916 0655) is a charity for those with an elderly relative or friend in long-term care. It offers advice and support, as well as working for better standards of care.*

• *The Elderly Accommodation Council (0181-742 1182) is a charity offering information on homes, sheltered and retirement housing. It does not recommend establishments or place people, but tries to fit the home to the person.*

In death, we can find life

Ruth Gledhill on consolation and hope in an Anglo-Catholic Mass



AFTER six months living on Epsom Downs, my conscience was being prodded by various newsletters and the occasional gift envelope dropped through the door by the faithful laity of the local parish church, and I could no longer ignore the call to check it out. It was with a sense of subliminal suburban joy that I surveyed the little red-brick, low-roofed mid-war church with its manicured lawn and cultivated flowerbeds in the heart of Nork, Surrey.

The gratification was short-lived, however, although the sense of belonging remained. Because, as is so often the case, behind the facade of serene normality, real life in the suburbs is as filled with tragedy, trauma, grief and sorrow as in the most outwardly deprived area of any inner city.

Our celebrant was the Rev William Gulliford, curate of the neighbouring parish. This was because for four years the parish of St Paul's has been living with the terminal illness of the wife of the Rev Peter Brooks, its vicar.

Elaine Brooks, like millions of others, had fought a brave battle against cancer, and at times it had seemed she might win. But at the last the disease gained the upper hand, and she died later that day. Father

Brooks, an Anglo-Catholic, had told me of his wife's illness over the telephone. My instant response had been that I could not attend the church that day, and certainly could not write about the service. In the circumstances, I could not conceive of awarding stars for anything, let alone for "spiritual high". I almost begged not to go. But he insisted. "Life must go on," he said. I felt ashamed for my lack of faith.

The service was remarkable.

The liturgy, inspired by the Orthodox faith, was an adaptation of that used by monks at the Crawley Down monastery on the Surrey-Sussex border, an order devoted to prayers for unity. And while the Mass was based firmly on the Tractarian or Anglo-Catholic tradition of the Church of England, many other traditions were also united there.

For example, the choir had long since abandoned formal robes. Instead, they wore sweatshirts in the colour of red wine, the golden flame of the Holy Spirit emblazoned on the front. These sweatshirts, designed by the vicar, have



comes and stands with us each week to be in our midst and affirm the message and resurrection of hope in Christ."

He preached on the Resurrection which followed Good Friday, and its message for all in the parish that day. "I cannot say I am pleased to be with you today. In normal circumstances I would not be here. But I am pleased to be able to do something for Father Peter and the family." It was the feast day of the baptism of Christ by John the Baptist, he said, and the collect had spoken of surrender. "The baptism of Christ is the symbol of Christ's surrender of himself. As we grow into our own baptisms we discover what it is to surrender ourselves."

Afterwards, we said the Creed and responded to the intercessory prayers. The congregation joined in the peace. Many surrendered to their tears but the Mass ended with communion and a sense that after so much pain, there could be peace.

• *St Paul's Church, Warren Road, Banstead, Surrey SM7 1LG (01737 353849).*

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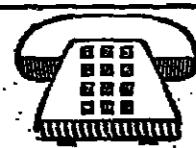
HOMILY: Father William said: "Death teaches us that the more deeply we enter into communion, so the more radically we must become detached and non-possessive." ★★★★★

LITURGY: Eastern and monastic. Beautiful. ★★★★

MUSIC: Mixed choir led us in responses and hymns. ★★★★

SPIRITUAL HIGH: Faith in the Resurrection. ★★★★★

AFTER-SERVICE CARE: Coffee, tea, home-made cake and hot buttered toast plus chance to meet new neighbours in the church hall next door. ★★★★★



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<b

The move by the editor of *Country Life* to establish the birthday suit as the height of rural fashion is surely doomed

The only ray of sunshine in what is proving to be a bleak, drab winter out here on the eastern bulge of Britain has been the centenary edition of *Country Life* magazine. For a chap who spends much of his working day alone, with the only shapely things visible through the window being the round rumps of his carthorses or the vast bulk of his pig, the decision by the editor to allow the "girls in pearls" to be photographed from angles hitherto unthinkable has to be roundly applauded.

Where once the photographer was never allowed to focus on anything lower than a lady-like neckline, we are now treated to naked images which descend far enough down the body to make visible that place which is normally only ever exposed by bending labourers. In another image, a chunk of thigh draped in pearls is laid before us like an adorned joint of lamb on a butcher's slab.

Where will all this undress end? Will the advertisers follow *Country Life's* editorial example and, instead of showing views of country houses for sale, offer us a revealing snapshot of the cupboard

Where will all this undress end?

under the stairs? I am sorry if this appreciation does not comply with political correctness, but we lads in the country do not have the daily dose of such stuff which those who travel to work by London Underground can expect. We have none of those titillating rides past an escalatorful of Demi Moore. So allow us, please, this one indulgence, once a century.

Of course, this move by *Country Life* to establish the birthday suit as the height of rural fashion is doomed. Barbara Cartland has said, "It is very sad how everything has become sordid these days", and women's groups have described it as a huge step backwards. And now I must join in the condemnation. Not on the grounds of scantiness or immodesty, but because the sight of naked flesh at this time of the year, in the country, is a betrayal of everything the country life is truly about. Purely for the interests of research, I have taken my

magnifying glass to these pictures, and I can tell you with some certainty that nowhere on the bodies of these girls is to be seen one single goose pimple, not so much as a hair standing on end; no sign of softness of focus caused by the chattering of the girl's teeth sending shivers down the body. No, these are not

"country" pictures at all; this is not "country" life, it is "shut up in a warm and cosy studio in the West End" life. And I am jealous, because there have been days this winter when I would have

swapped even my pig for a few hours in the warmth. Life has been nothing but those few stolen moments between chopping wood, filling log baskets, lighting fires. Of course, I could switch on the central heating and use some of the vast oil reserves in the tank which, if suddenly allowed on to the open market,

would upset trading on the Amsterdam spot market but I have always believed you can only extract the best from country life by doing things the hard way, no pain no gain, and so I hone my

axe and shun the override button on the heating timeswitch.

In nearly 15 years of chopping winter firewood, I have learnt a lot about timber and even more about the people who sell it. Dealers in firewood are quick to spot a sucker, and an early purchase of mine was from the farmer's son who promised me fine logs. They looked good, were nicely sawn, and arrived in what looked like a generous heap.

Country life, at this time of year, is about pain. That there is no hint of suffering in the pictures of these undressed girls suggests that the editor has betrayed his true country readers.

So, I challenge him to take the girl who appears to be wearing nothing but an item of pearls jewellery about her thighs, remove even that bit of modest chaffing, and if beneath it we can see a bruise I shall be satisfied that these are true country gals, and that this fine magazine is in safe hands.

TIM GUTT

DOWN TO EARTH



PAUL HEINEY

Press a sweet song on the old apple tree

The ancient wassails draw attention to the decline of fruit orchards in Britain. Brian Pedley reports

For just one night a year, the creekside village of Stoke Gabriel kicks up one unhappy racket. The Devon sky, unusually heavy with the threat of snow, is suddenly rent by shotgun firing blanks and the clanging of pots and pans! The local wading birds are startled into an indignant chorus. The cider flows and everyone sings and cheers, including the children. As with any wassail worthy of the name, the effect is magical.

Each year, around Twelfth Night Stoke Gabriel people summon up ancient forces to ensure an abundant crop of apples in the orchard that has been theirs for centuries. This year's celebration took place last Saturday.

"The wassail goes back to when people were never quite sure that spring would follow winter," says Trudy Turrell, countryside interpretation officer with South Hams council. "As well as waking the trees from their winter slumber, the noise is meant to drive out evil spirits — the ones that stop the hounds from fruiting."

Once, the winter wassail was widespread throughout the fruit-growing areas of southern and western England. Then, every farm pressed its own cider. The heady autumnal draught often formed part of farm workers' wages. In Victorian times, a labourer consumed on average 130 gallons of cider in a course of a year.

In 1970, there remained 154,000 acres of orchards in the UK. But pressure for new houses and roads helped accelerate the decline. Orchards in villages and on the edge of towns became prime targets

for development. Newer sites were grabbed up as part of European Union attempts to reduce surpluses. By 1994, the acreage had fallen by more than half. Once there were 6,000 recorded varieties of apple, many unique to a single parish or farm. Now, only nine dominate in Britain. Ancient cider barns were bulldozed away, along with unimproved pasture that was rich in flowers, insects, birds and mammals. Consigned to distant memory was a vast library of apple lore.

The fruit field to have magical qualities was used in springtime healing and healing. Decorated apples were taken around houses as a sign of friendliness and good health. The wassail varied only in the fine detail. In Sussex they called it "worsing" — in Cornwall it was the "wassale". Now it survives in only a handful of villages in Devon and Somerset. When we grabbed up our orchards, we lost much more than mere trees.

"Every farm and country house had its own orchard of mixed fruit trees for kitchen use," says Sue Clifford, founder and director of Common Ground, the London-based environmental charity. "But we let it all fall through our fingers."

Six years ago, the organisation launched a nationwide campaign to encourage the restoration of old orchards and to create new ones. A revived apple tradition was seen as vital: "We thought if we could reinvent any of it, we could reinvent the orchard as well. We have been astonished at the way people have responded," Ms Clifford says.

Common Ground has since seen more than 100 communities

invites females, "Would you like to come and join me?" In Holland in the last century, male chaffinches were sometimes kept in darkness throughout the summer, and then given a little more light each day. Their bodies changed as they would to lengthening daylight — and they began to sing in October. By then, large flocks of migrating chaffinches were coming into Holland from northern Europe and the singing males were used to attract the females and trap them for use as food. It was a practical experiment that clearly showed the impact of increasing light on the males.

Near London I expect to hear my first chaffinch singing some time next week. Of course, the weather does also influence birds, and if it is cold and grey I may have to wait another week or so, but male chaffinches are getting busy. The older ones will try to occupy the territory they had last year, while birds raised last summer will try to squeeze themselves in somewhere.

They are all starting to examine apple trees for suitable forks for a nest, and to fly conspicuously round what they hope will be their boundaries. They call with a loud "chink, chink" and finally start singing. After that, their song — a string of rattling notes that grows faster and louder and ends in a cheerful



Summoning up ancient forces, Leanne Gammin, left, reaches into the branches while Joanna Read, right, pours cider over the apple tree's roots

FEATHER REPORT

Clear away the cobwebs from last year's nest

After Christmas, one thing changes whatever the weather: the days start to get longer. That is important to birds now. The lengthening hours of daylight trigger changes inside them, and towards the end of January many start to prepare for

spring. The males look for territories with suitable nesting-places, and when they have found one they begin to defend it against other males.

Above all, they start to sing. Their song proclaims to other males, "This is my property for the coming season", and

invites females, "Would you like to come and join me?"

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try to establish themselves. The shiny black young males have already started courting on the lawn — approaching a brown female with their head feathers lifted, their rump feathers raised in a hump, their tail spread and a wild look in their eye.

Blackbirds are engaged in

much the same thing. The older birds often join up with the mate they had the previous year. Both male and female will have stayed around the territory during the winter, if it provided enough food, though they will probably have roosted in separate bushes. Now the male starts roosting next to his old partner and they start defending the territory together again.

The blackbirds that will start singing in early February will mostly be young ones

song was then again bellowed to the skies: "For to bloom well and to bear well, so merry let us be."

The guns blazed. The "old apple tree" had been toasted, woken and serenaded as though it were a real person. It is, in a way. "You lose one tree and you risk losing an entire

variety of apple," says Ms Turrell. On Stoke Gabriel's wassail night, Joanna and Leanne reclaimed and reaffirmed something for others of their generation.

Common Ground, Seven Dials Workhouse, 44 Eastham Street, London WC2H 9LA (071-393 3109).

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For your school	£100	£75	£50	£50

SEE PAGE 10 OF 1015 FOR DETAILS



Male chaffinches will soon be house-hunting and singing an invitation to mates

is a winner of the New Year Jumbo Crossword, who receives a glass of Moët & Chandon champagne and £100, is Fisher of Ledbury, Herefordshire. The five runners-up, who receive £100, are: P. Barham of London N6; A. Carr of Bedford, East Sussex; N. Marpeth of Harpenden, Hertfordshire; E. Proctor of Eastcote, Middlesex; P. Ratkes of Oxford.

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THE TIMES

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The Genoese built their fort above the harbour in Bonifacio with its row of welcoming restaurants — but a short drive inland you find the home of vengeance and vendetta with a brooding air of thinly suppressed menace

Stolen moments in bandit country

On hearing that I was off to Corsica, a friend urged me first to read the definitive book by Dorothy Carrington, whose title escaped her.

She meant Ms Carrington's *Granit Island*, but I mistakenly bought *The Dream-Hunters of Corsica*, and so arrived on the island feeling from the book's extraordinary tales of the *mazzari*, the village women who traditionally had

mystic powers to foretell or invoke death through dreams of hunting down their victims in the mountains, the island's heady, hero-faded vegetation.

This was pretty spooky stuff, and I am not easily spooked.

Yet I found Corsica to be a truly strange island, with a brooding air of thinly suppressed violence and menace.

This is the home of vengeance

and vendetta, of banditry and resistance, whose favourite tourist souvenirs are proud

display in every shop are a vast range of fierce-looking combat knives, from cut little flick-knives to 18-inch serrated jobs, many of them with *Vendetta* lovingly inscribed along the blade. A sinister extension of this craft seen in one shop was a range of tawdry goods bearing a hooded figure holding an AK-47 above the legend *Liberté pour les patriotes*. Shame on any one who buys one.

The high inland town of Sartène is proud to be the home of the island's last official bandit, who emerged from hiding in the maquis in 1955 to do his penance. Strolling one lunchtime through its dark, silent streets overshadowed by tall, secretive, shuttered granite houses, every time I turned my head it was to glimpse a furive shadow slipping into an alley entrance, or a door being audaciously opened by an unseen hand.

Several of the houses had massive wooden doors with the island's bizarre symbol, the *Tête de Maure* (moor's head), carved into them. I was not inclined to linger.

It was a relief to find that Ajaccio, the island's capital on the west coast, is a pleasant, sunny, bustling port of shady squares and harbour-front cafés. The Saturday market is an intoxicating mix of herby, spicy smells, charcuterie and cheese stalls, fruit and veg, local honeys, liqueurs made from myrtle and aperitifs made from red wine and herbs (try Cap Corse, one of the best).

Corsican music, both old and new, is enormously popular and beautiful; it is played in bars and cafés and tapes sold on market stalls everywhere.

On the wall of the railway station in Ajaccio is a helpful notice in English extolling the delights of the train trip inland to Corte. It reads: "It is a must. The train winds around the mountain, crosses audacious bridges, grapples on the rock far from the road and the villages at the foot of the snow covered Monte d'Oro, and goes through the magnificent forest of Vizzavona planted with *harricane* pines and beeches."

Who could resist? So for two hours and 35 minutes we did

indeed wind around the mountain, at walking speed, the pines brushing the windows on either side until the ground fell dizzy away to allow us to wobble precariously across a succession of spidery bridges, each more audacious than the last.

Strategically sited high in the mountains at the island's geographical centre, Corte was the capital of the mid 18th-century independent nation created by Pasquale Paoli.

From here the great visionary ran his enlightened democratic state, finding time to found a university in 1764, until the French overran his forces in 1769, and moved their capital to Ajaccio.

Ajaccio's elegant old government building has a new life as the Centre for Corsican Studies, housing while we were there an extraordinarily chic avant-garde art installation which, while its meaning was wasted on me, I instinctively felt would not have looked out of place at the Tate.

What was not wasted on me was lunch, sitting outside a flower-decked restaurant in a cobbled square, where the local delicacies on offer included blackbird terrine, wild boar, herb tarts, trout stuffed with *brocciu* (the local goat's cheese), and for dessert *fiaidone* — a sweet tart of lemon and *brocciu*.

The boar season opened just after we arrived, and the hills around our villa were alive with the sound of gunfire. The

local paper had on its front page a picture of five smug huntsmen with a dozen or so mangy looking boar carcasses at their feet. I was about to deplore this barbaric practice until that last season, half a dozen of the beasts had to be closed away from our swimming pool.

But I cannot tell you what

bear tastes like: we all had

steak and chips. Delicious.

And while we ate and pondered the matter of not missing

the last train back, we were serenaded by a guitar and a superb voice, singing in

Corsican, which is no mere dialect but a language in its own right that is closer to

Italian than French.

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When planning excursions,

by all means add up the

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ard: cows, goats, and the ever-present wild pigs. A delightful and not too demanding drive from the Ajaccio area is inland to Basteliccia, 33km (about 21 miles) on the map, but see above. This gives plenty of hairpin practice, with the reward of Corsican cooking for lunch on the terrace of the pretty Hotel du Castagnettu.

Having got our mountain legs, or wheels, we struck north as far as the Gulf of Porto to see the bizarre red rock formations of Les Calanche.

This unique landscape is absolutely unmissable, and for surely one of the most beautiful views in Europe, in the village of Piana just south of the bay, turn west on a rough lane to the Saliceto Belvedere, and wind your way up the cliffs for a few kilometres until you come to the communications masts and the cross which mark the summit. Grab your camera, get out of the car, and hold on to your hat — it blows up there.

At the southern tip of Corsica, with Sardinia clearly visible across the water, lies

the town of Bonifacio. The

landscape as you drive south

flattens out and becomes dry,

rugged and wild. Even the

maquis cannot get a root-hold

on this rock.

Bonifacio's old buildings

rise above the desert like a

mirage, perched on a spur of

blindingly white cliffs which

have been so severely eroded

underneath the town that the

houses on the edges are effecti-

vely balancing on thin air.

The narrow streets and tall

houses of the old high town

lead you out to a sailors' cemetery and fortress on the

spur's very tip.

Descend back through the

town and steeply down to the

harbour to take your pick of

the long row of restaurants

along the water's edge, from

which vantage point you can

watch the sleek yachts dis-

gorge their cargoes of equally

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France: Savouring the birthplace of *Cakes and Ale*, Peter Stothard finds even the zoo animals dine in style...

Reverie on Maugham's Cap Ferrat



Somerset Maugham at his retreat, Villa Mauresque

You can tell a lot about a place by looking at its zoo. On Cap Ferrat the crocodiles shine like living handbags; the tigers parade their thick Siberian coats on the warmest autumn day; the Vietnamese pot-bellied pigs (not stylish creatures even by standards less exacting than those of the Côte d'Azur) display their dull, black skins against a designer-grey background of cinders.

On Cap Ferrat, the sometime playground of Belgian kings, French mistresses and boyfriends of Somerset Maugham, the leopards saunter like starlets, and even the warthogs are fed on grissini. One moment you can be nipping at a breadstick in a hotel bar, staring across to Nice or Monte Carlo, and the next feeling the same delicate food-stuff, neatly packaged in Cellophane at five francs a portion, pass the backward-pointing tusks of African wild pigs.

This is not a place whose authorities worry too much where the next dollar is coming from. Dollars have been flowing here since its discovery by fashionable society in



Villa owners on Cap Ferrat have always had to keep up with such notorious big spenders as Beatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild, whose pink palace is full of Fragonard and Sévres

ed edition of its owner's vast and lucrative oeuvre, still stares at unwelcome visitors from the entrance.

Maugham liked to write about the people and places around his French retreat. Two of the best examples are *The Facts of Life*, a short story set against the casino of Monte Carlo, and *The Three Pat*

Women of Antibes, a bravura portrayal of bitchery, bridge and slimming. But the author also came to Cap Ferrat, like many other tourists since, to relax and think about the life he had left behind. It was here that he wrote *Cakes and Ale*, creating his finest heroine around the character of the first Mrs Thomas Hardy, and cocking a faraway snook at the literary London of the 1920s whose idiocies both amused him and had made him rich.

Money meant a great deal to Maugham. Villa owners on Cap Ferrat have always had to keep up with such notorious big spenders as Beatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild, whose pink palace, full of Fragonard and Sévres, remains there for tourists like a small Wallace Collection in the sun. Maugham had to fund his extravagances from his own pockets; at his own more modest palace he used to harass his publishers with as

much vigour as that for which his modern successors are so often mocked.

In *Cakes and Ale* there is a special word of admiration for the literary lioniser Mrs Sidney Colvin, who helps a favourite poet out of obscurity. "She dealt with the publishers and made contracts for him that would have staggered even a Cabinet minister; she even went so far as to separate him from his wife, with whom he had lived happily for ten years, since she felt that a poet, to be true to himself and his art, must not be encumbered with domestic ties." Maugham's marriage, to the daughter of the original Dr Barnardo, was little part of his life on the Riviera.

The great old man of letters is more prominently remembered now not at his home (which has given its name to the local bus stop) but a few hundred yards away towards the sea at the piano-bar of the Grand-Hôtel du Cap Ferrat. Even in an off-season weekend in October, when the sun

cannot be guaranteed to reflect on to the Cap from the white cliffsides, this hotel is one of those rare places which works like the smoothest engine.

With a glass funicular stretching down its gardens to an overflowing salt-water pool, its precise, staff and immaculate pale cream and avocado decoration, it is a

tiny repeated theme in

Maugham's novels and stories is the ever-increasing demands placed by guests on hotels. Today's Grand Hotel would have no difficulty with the most demanding visitor from the past.

The same cannot be said for its similarly priced inland companion, the Château de la Chèvre d'Or, in the popular cliffside village of Èze. Out of season here meant out of service, and a long wait even to restore heat to a chilly room.

Although the views of where we had been on Cap Ferrat were spectacular, we were left envying the thick coats of the grissini-eating tigers.

CAP FERRAT FACT FILE

■ Rooms at the Grand-Hôtel du Cap Ferrat (0334 93 76 50) start from F750 (about £34 a night). The Suite Royale costs from Fr4,500 a night. A dinner menu dinner would cost about Fr20 (drinks not included).

■ The Château de la Chèvre d'Or (0334 92 10 66 66), in the village of Èze, charges £1,000 a night for a single room in low season, £2,400 a night for a junior suite (prices of main suites

on application).

■ French Expressions, 13 McCorone Mews, Belsize Lane, London NW5 5BG (0171-431 1312, fax 441 422) can arrange tailor-made holidays throughout France, including three-night breaks at the Grand-Hôtel from £459 per person, and at the Chèvre d'Or from £516, with bed and breakfast, scheduled flights to Nice and self-drive car hire. The Chèvre d'Or is also featured by Union Holidays — the Best of France (01822 334400, fax 231133).

■ Zoo de Cap Ferrat (00 334 93 76 04 99), Villa et Jardins Ephrussi de Rothschild (00 334 93 01 33 09); open daily 2pm, weekends and holidays 10am-6pm.

■ The French Tourist Board, 0891 244123 (calls are charged at 3p a minute, cheap rate, 4p at all other times); Nice Tourist Office, 00 334 93 87 07 07.

■ Reading: *Tender is the Night*, by F Scott Fitzgerald (Penguin, £5.99, ISBN 0 140 18075 3); *Collected Short Stories*, Vol 1, by W Somerset Maugham (Mandarin, £7.99, ISBN 0 7475 30345 X); *France Côte d'Azur*, by Dame Fabrics and Michael Pauls (Cadogan, £12.99, ISBN 1 860 11061 4).

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France: Nagged by his horse-loving 12-year-old daughter, Paul Heiney rides again – after a gap of 15 years...

Saddle sore but happy on the trails of the Tarn

Of the many mysteries which growing daughters present to their fathers, there is none more perplexing than the relationship between a 12-year-old and ponies. I reassure myself that there are more dangerous liaisons in which a pre-teenage girl could be indulging. But tolerance was not enough. A "riding holiday" was demanded.

I have heard bad reports of these holidays: all bunt beds and baked beans and nothing to read but a tattered *Horse and Hound* or *Bunty*. Anyway, I do not like riding.

But fathers have duties and so daughter Rose and I lugged our helmets, breeches, boots and saddle-sore ointment to the rolling hills of the Tarn, an hour by train from Toulouse. Half close your eyes in Derbyshire. Ravines and gorges are scoured by fast-flowing rivers: the steep hillsides are thick with pine and broad-leaved trees, and the tops of the hills are flat farmland.

Les Juliannes at Paulinet, our destination, lies 1,200ft above sea level, with a view all the way to the Pyrenees. I was not looking that far. My eyes

Rose Heiney writes:
Well I never thought I'd see the day when Dad would climb upon a horse, kick it into a canter, and jump while I stood watching, hands over eyes. Anyway, we both had some incredible rides. I actually found the rides more daunting than my father, not having much of a head for heights. Astonishing really, what you'll do under the instruction of someone who doesn't speak your language.



were on the fit and polished horses, the large stable and indoor school, set well away from the farmhouse, and on the house itself. No bunkhouse here; it is an adorable 17th-century farmhouse with walls 2ft thick to deflect summer heat.

There are only six bedrooms and, I am happy to report, no evidence of any sweaty horseblanket ever having crossed the threshold. It is the French farmhouse of your dreams, and within an hour of arriving it was hard to believe we were not personal and lifelong friends of our hosts, Marc and Claudine.

I spotted vast jugs of red wine on the farmhouse table, and thought I might decline the riding. You do not have to ride here; you can eat, drink and swim in the pool.

Daughter had other ideas. On the first day, I found myself booked in for a morning lesson and a two-hour ride in the afternoon. I presented myself at the stables in a pair of breeches cut for a finer figure than mine and was introduced to my horse, an upstanding chestnut gelding

see it. But give the horses plenty of rein and they find footholds. Then you relax when you meet the lush meadows on the valley floors, let your horse drink at the fast-flowing streams, soak up the fragrance of the forests and the hot animal beneath you.

It hurt on the first day, but by day three I had a rump like the Lone Ranger's. I needed to ride. "OK. Gallocoop." Not having the French to say politely, "No thank you, rising trot will be fine." I had no choice. "Get into your jumping position," he said, demonstrating a pose like a jockey at Becher's Brook.

Even now the word "gallocoop" had sunk into the brains of the horses and antique Paulinet was gathering speed. There was no ejection seat, no parachute. So I galloped. Backside out of the saddle, standing in the stirrups, reins shortened, head low.

The pace quickened, the forest air whistling past till we emerged at the top of the hill and slowed to a walk. Fantastic! The whole ride punched the air and cried out with joy. After three hours in the saddle, I staggered back to the farmhouse and discovered to my delight that to get to our room you walk past the kitchen window. Peering through the shutters I could see Marc toying with his mustards, oils, vinaigrettes and wine. This was better than embrocation.

We fed late and superbly every night on the robust

cuisine of the Tarn (goose pâté, unbelievable, stuffed duck's neck beyond description), and swilled red wine like horses at a trough. Claudine, smiling like the Mona Lisa, joined us with the chocolate pudding.

After that the days got better. To my astonishment as much as Rose's, under the firm direction of Guy I did a little jumping, and liked it. There were three "gallocoops" every day, each more thrilling than the preceding one.

One lady took a tumble (a rare occurrence here), whereupon the youthful Guy swung down from his horse, broke a twig from the hedge for a splint, and ripped his shirt from his taut body to improvise a sling. Then, bare-chested, he flung himself into the saddle and galloped at full speed for help. Beat that for romance.

Even now I miss my daily gallop through the forests, pausing to pick blackberries then trotting through the small farmyards where chickens roost in old 2CVs.

I shall go on a horse-riding holiday again. I might even let the daughter come, too.

• Paul and Rose Heiney were guests of *Intravel*.

FACT FILE

■ **Intravel**, Hovingham, York YO6 4JZ (01653 628862). Les Juliannes opens from March to late October and is suitable for riders of all ages and abilities. Prices start from £445 for seven nights with self-drive (or from £995 by air to Toulouse, train and transfer) and includes half-board, ten hours' instruction or five half-day rides.

■ **VFB France Active** (01242 240310) includes horse riding as part of its multifaceted holidays in the French Alps.

■ **Reading Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes**, by R.L. Stevenson (OUP, £4.99, ISBN 0 19 282629 9). *Michelin Gorges du Tarn* (in French only) (£3.99, ISBN 2 06 33703 9).



The Tarn region in southern France, with its picturesque scenery, is ideal for riding

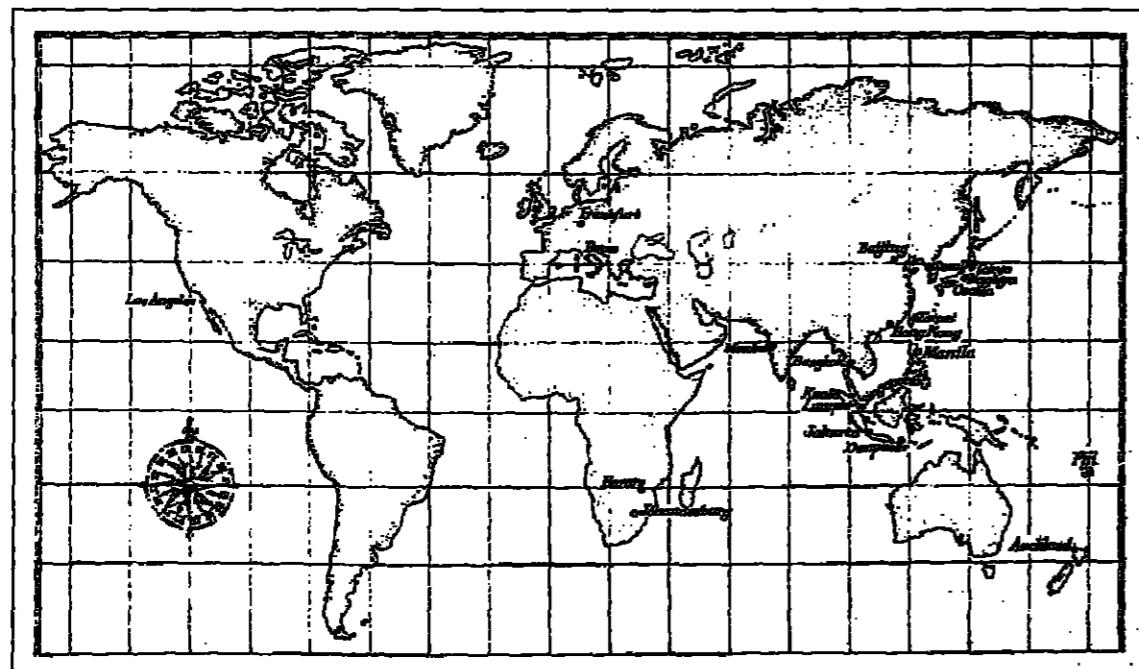
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Russian Waterways of the GOLDEN RING

The opening of the waterways between St Petersburg and Moscow allows us to link a visit to two great cities with a relaxing cruise that travels the Neva River, Lake Ladoga, the Svir River, Lake Onega, the Baltic Canal, White Lake, the Volga River and finally the Moscow and Volga Canal. This intricate system of waterways has a beauty that is hard to describe. Serene, peaceful and timeless with silver birch and pine forests, sandy shores, calm flowing water and spectacular late sunsets in these realms of the 'White Nights'. Calls will be at such historic towns as Uglich, where the blue cupolas decorated with the golden stars of the riverside church make a stunning landmark.

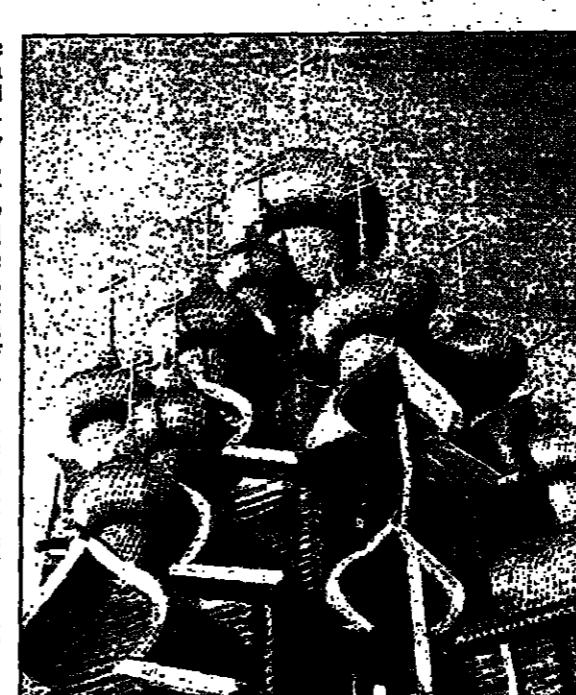
For many the visit to Kizhi Island in Lake Onega will be the highlight of the watery journey. Here the magnificent Church of the Transfiguration with its 22 shimmering grey domes in three tiers are more than a match for the fairytale splendour of Moscow's St Basil's. From here we cruise through the fascinating waterway system through Goritsy to the cities of the Golden Ring, stopping at Yaroslavl and Uglich on the mighty Volga. These magical cities of Holy Russia still preserve their medieval kremlins, fortified monasteries and churches, in surroundings remote from the modern world.

For this journey we are operating with the MS Karamzin which was used for the first time last year and received high praise from a large number of passengers. The tour represents extremely good value for money and will therefore appeal to those wishing to see unsophisticated parts of Russia from an economical and comfortable base.

The MS Karamzin

This comfortable, well-maintained ship was built in Germany and recently partially renovated. All cabins are outside with large picture window (except those on the Lower Deck that have two port-holes), private shower, toilet and temperature control; the ship is fully air-conditioned. The bright, pleasant restaurant has windows on three sides offering views as you dine. Cuisine (Russian and Continental) is adjusted to western taste. There is a main lounge/bar with live music, several more lounges, beauty shop and ample deckspace. Laundry service is available and a medical doctor is on board.

Because the ship is now under Western management, you can expect many upgraded amenities (including quality towels, soap, toilet paper, coffee) and better food, service, cruise director and staff.



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10 nights from £795.00



Itinerary

Day 1 Fly from London Gatwick to St Petersburg. Drive to the MS Karamzin.

Day 2 In the morning a sightseeing tour of the city will include Peter and Paul Fortress.

Day 3 Morning visit to the Hermitage Museum. Afternoon visit to Pushkin, the blue and gold rococo palace designed for the Empress Elizabeth. Sail in the evening.

Day 4 Svir Stroy - the day is spent leisurely cruising Lake Ladoga and the Svir River stopping at Kizhi Island - sail across Lake Onega to Kizhi and see the typical wooden churches, houses with early barns and windmills. A visit will be made to the Transfiguration Church.

Day 5 Kizhi Island - sail across Lake Onega to Kizhi and see the typical wooden churches, houses with early barns and windmills. A visit will be made to the Transfiguration Church.

Day 6 Goritsy - sail along the Baltic Canal and across White Lake to the town of Goritsy.

to visit Kirill Belo-serski Monastery.

Day 7 Yaroslavl - one of the seven cities of the 'Golden Ring'. A city sightseeing tour includes

some of the churches and fine examples of

16th-century architecture.

Day 8 Uglich - cruise along the Volga to Uglich. Founded in the 12th century, it was here that Ivan the Terrible's youngest son was murdered. Sail in the evening towards Moscow crossing the Moscow/Volga Canal.

Day 9 Sail along the River Moscow reaching Moscow in the late morning. A city tour is arranged for the afternoon.

Day 10 Morning city tour of Moscow to Red Square, St. Basil's Cathedral and the Kremlin including a visit to the Armoury Museum.

Day 11 Return flight from Moscow to London Heathrow.

Departure Dates & Prices

1997 (per person in Lower Deck)

May 14* £645.00

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August 20* £645.00

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**Subject to availability in the respective cities of departure and destination and subject to change. All itineraries are subject to our Conditions of Booking, copies of which is available on request.

**Note that some dates of departure will operate from Moscow to St Petersburg, depending on the time of booking.

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*these dates are available in the reverse direction to Petersburg.

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... and Brian Jackman walks the smugglers' tracks of the Cerdagne, a lost valley deep in the Pyrenees

Turn right at Dead Man's Fountain

If the way from Perpignan the peaches hung red and ripe in the roadside orchards. Higher, beyond the medieval walls of Villefranche de Conflent in the foothills of the Pyrenees, the Spanish chestnuts were in flower. Despite a snowfall at the end of May, summer had come with scorching temperatures.

From Villefranche the road ran towards Spain, following the narrow-gauge tracks of Le Petit Train Jaune, France's highest railway line, into the heart of the Cerdagne, a lost valley hidden deep in the Catalan Pyrenees.

The Cerdagne is classic frontier country, a mixture of colliding cultures with a curious, dislocated history. Long ago the medieval Kings of Mallorca ruled here. Until the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659 this region still belonged to Catalonia; but then the power of Spain receded, leaving the Cerdagne washed up permanently on the French side of the border. Yet, even today Llivia, once the capital of the Cerdagne, remains as a Spanish enclave marooned inside France, where people say "Hola" instead of "Bonjour", and the villages of the Cerdagne with their curious truncated names — Hix, Ur, Err and Llo — are still strongly Catalan in character.

I was heading for Valsebollere, a welcoming mountain inn whose patron, Etienne Lafite, first came to Valsebollere at the age of 11 to holiday at his uncle's house. He fell in love with the region — something which is not



Today *les contrebandiers* are gone from the rugged Pyrenees and walkers now follow their old, clandestine trails, returning to a hot bath or sauna and a four-course dinner

hard to do — and came back to transform the valley into a delightful retreat for mountain walkers.

"My uncle was a famous smuggler," he said. "He was always taking cigarettes, nylon and other little luxuries into Spain. During the Second

World War he also helped to hide escaped British PoWs across the Pyrenees into Spain. He just asked if they would help carry some extra contraband for him."

Today, *les contrebandiers* are gone and walkers follow their old, clandestine trails, returning at the end of an arduous hike to enjoy a hot bath or sauna, followed by a splendid four-course dinner cooked by *le patron* himself.

Fortified by a breakfast of fresh apricot juice, hot croissants and coffee, I set off up the steep path into the mountains behind the auberge. The summer meadows were bright with wild flowers: orchids, trefoils, scented pinks, sky-blue campanulas and yellow gentians with leaves like asses' ears. But what most caught the eye were the butterflies, rising and falling among the grass heads.

Some were familiar: orange tips, painted ladies, clouded yellows. Others — continental varieties of blues, coppers and fritillaries — I knew only from illustrations in field guides.

Black-venued whites, a species not seen in Britain since the 19th century, were common here, flying in the company of another butterfly I had never seen before — the *Parnassius apollo* — its large, papery-white wings exquisitely marked with black, grey and faded blood-red spots.

Higher up the track, where the pines and alpen roses ended, open hillsides of close-cropped grass rose steeply

towards the skyline. It was too late in the year to see the pasqueflowers in bloom. Their feathered grey husks were everywhere, nodding in the breeze. But the sun-baked slopes were still covered with cushiony clumps of pink and mountain saxifrage. With my binoculars I spotted five iards — Pyrenean chamois — grazing on a distant mountainside.

The summits of these Cerdanian mountains are rounded in outline, like the Scottish Highlands, with patches of tired-looking snow still lying in their green hollows. But everything is on a much grander scale. Puigmal, the highest peak in the Cerdagne, is not far off 3,000 metres. Puigmal, the Evil Mountain, is notorious for its sudden, treacherous mood swings; sunshine one moment, sunbeams the next. Today its dark silhouette stood out sharp and clear against the sky, keeping watch over one of Europe's loneliest frontiers.

At last I reached the long, rolling crest to the west of Puigmal. A path runs along it, marked by cairns. I stood on the frontier and saw the mountains of Spain, blue with distance, marching south into the heat haze towards Barcelona. Farther on I came to an old mule track snaking steeply down past a spring known as Dead Man's Fountain, head-

ing for the sunlit valleys far below. Maybe Etienne Lafite's uncle had once used this route, sneaking through the night with his tobacco and his British fugitives?

I retraced my steps until I

was out of the wind and found a sheltered grassy hollow in which to enjoy the magnificent picnic which Mr Lafite had provided: omelette aux champignons, pâté, air-dried ham, tomatoes, cheese, cherries,

half a crusty loaf and a goatskin *bota* of sharp red wine.

Afterwards, lying back in the grass, watching the cloud shadows sailing over the mountainsides, I noticed three black specks in the sky. They were griffon vultures — giant birds with a 2m wingspan — patrolling the mountains in search of carrion.

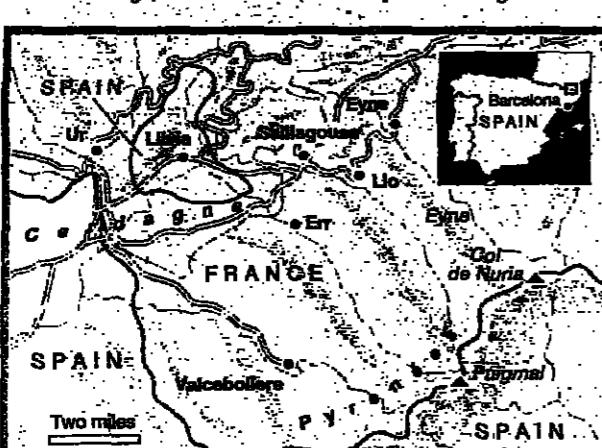
Eagles also frequent this high country, and lower down in the fathomless forests, among the alpen rose glades and old-growth pines, the lynx still lingers like a legend, along with wild boar, pine martens, capercaille and the *hibou grand duc* or eagle owl, with its gruff voice and glaring orange eyes.

Later during my stay, at Mr Lafite's insistence, I drove to the nearby village of Eyne in order to walk up the Eyne Valley, a nature reserve renowned for its wild flowers. The walk began in a summer meadow, loud with grasshoppers. At the edge of the path a butcher-bird swung on a dog-rose stem. As I followed the tumbling mountain torrent upstream through fragrant pinewoods, the sides of the valley drew closer, with dizzy crags and pinnacles tearing at the clouds.

Here, as in the high meadows above Valsebollere, there were butterflies galore: marbled whites, Scotch argus and Queen of Spain fritillaries with quicksilver underwings. But in the Eyne Valley it is the flowers that take pride of place: wild mauve geraniums, orchids and globe flowers, drifts of blue and yellow gentians, bistort and hay rattle, creamy swags of meadow-sweet, with here and there the magnificent martagon or Turk's-cap lily, the pride of the Pyrenees.

It is one of the loveliest sunn walks in Europe.

• Brian Jackman was a guest of Intravel.



CERDAGNE FACT FILE

■ Intravel, Horningham, York YO6 4JZ (01653 628962) in its Inn-Active summer brochure features independent walking holidays in the Cerdagne, including the Eyne Valley and the Auberge les Ecureuils in Valsebollere. Walk options range from six to ten days. Luggage is transported between hotels, and accommodation is half-board, with picnics provided on every walking day. Seven nights, with flights from Gatwick in Perpignan and private transfer, cost from £498. Or you can use the Auberge les Ecureuils in Valsebollere as a base, where self-drive prices for a three-night stay start at £179. Intravel also offers an accompanied to the footsteps of the Smugglers walk in August and September (seven nights from £765).

■ Naturetrek (01962 733051) also offers botanical walking trips in the French Pyrenees.

■ Reading: *Song of Roland* (Penguin, £6.99, ISBN 0 140 44532 3); *Walks and Climbs in the Pyrenees*, by Kev Reynolds (Cicerone, £14.99, ISBN 1 852 84133 8); *Michelin Guide Pyrenees Roussillon* (ISBN 2 06 36804 9) and *Pyrenees Aquitaine* (ISBN 2 06 36704 2). In French, £8.99 each. *Pyrenees*, by Marc Dubin (Rough Guides, £8.99, ISBN 1 858 28093 1).

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ICELANDAIR

Britain: On a hike from south to north, Robin Neillands recommends delightful spots away from the crowds

Secrets of a long-distance walker

TO SUGGEST that England is an undiscovered country is to invite ridicule. England is not Antarctica, though it sometimes felt like it last May when I was walking from the south coast to Hadrian's Wall. On that journey I passed through some surprisingly beautiful country, so, because good things should be shared, here is a selection of little known places well worth visiting. There are plenty more like these for those who make the time to look around.

SOUTH DORSET AND THE FLEET

The Fleet is a great saltwater lake trapped off the Dorset coast by the Chelis Bank. I came on it in the evening, when the air was still, the clouds were pink-tipped by the setting sun and, apart from squadrons of swans floating serenely on the water, the place was deserted — and this only a couple of miles from the busy resort of Weymouth.

Apart from tranquillity, the Fleet has history: it has been a nature reserve since 1933 and the swans are still protected and cared for by the Swanery at Abbotsford. The little church beside the shore at Old Fleet is all that remains of the village, destroyed in the last century by a tidal wave, but the church was a haunt of smugglers and features in John Meade Falkner's classic tale *Moorside*.

South Dorset is a special place in a much-neglected county; Dorchester and the Thomas Hardy country pull in the crowds, but the Fleet is the place to linger.

SEVERN VALLEY

A good way to see the Severn Valley is to follow the Severn Way footpath. I walked north on it for several days, through fine towns such as Tewkesbury, with its ancient abbey, and Worcester, with its cathedral overlooking the county cricket ground, then up-river to places like Stourport-on-Severn, a Mecca for river craft and Bewdley.

Bewdley is small and pretty and lies at the southern end of the Severn Valley Railway, one of those newly restored lines that give character to the countryside. Because it was Saturday and the engines were "in steam", I took the train up Hampton Loade, where one of the last Severn ferries carries passengers to the eastern bank fare, 20p.

The Severn Valley around Bewdley is a little visited part of England, and the Severn Valley Guest House in Bewdley



Robin Neillands pauses in the northern Pennines on his long walk of discovery from the coast of Dorset to the north of Cumbria and across the Scottish border to Portpatrick

ley, run by a passionate railway buff, is a good place to stay while touring.

STAFFORDSHIRE WAY

This is another of England's under-used footpaths, which I

way are heading for the Peak District, but the 92-mile-long Staffordshire Way is ideal for a one-week, crowd-free, autumn walk, and I commend it.

WEST OF THE PENNINES

The Pennine Way, north of Buxton, is partly a bog and partly paved, and not all that attractive. Fortunately, the lower country to the west is delightful and threaded with towpaths and footpaths. Further west lies a great swath of industrial cities around Manchester, but there is plenty of open moorland here and it is easy, and fun, to keep away from the cities, either using canal towpaths, or tramping on moorland routes such as the Oldham Way and the Burnley Way.

The Green Ash Hotel in Delph is a good place to stay, but other places to mark on the map are Uppermill and Denshaw, for exploring the country to the north into Calderdale. Perfect.

AROUND MORECAMBE BAY

Morecambe is one of the great northwestern tourist resorts, but north of Morecambe the crowds thin out. The big attraction of Morecambe Bay,

apart from the spectacular sunsets, is the walk across the sands with Cedric Robinson, the Queen's Guide, who leads parties across the wide and treacherous estuary of the River Kent from Arnside to Grange-over-Sands.

Arnside is a delightful little resort, small with just a promenade lined with guest houses, pubs and small restaurants, but a splendid spot for walkers and birdwatchers. The whole area is spattered with nature reserves, flocks of wading birds parade across the sands, and those who fancy a spot of adventure can join Mr Robinson for his weekly bay walks.

NORTHERN LAKES

The golden rule in the Lake District is to head for the high fells as soon as you arrive and avoid the whole place in summer when it becomes overcrowded. In early spring it is magnificent.

I spent two days here, based at Laurel Cottage, a superb B&B in Windermere, touring into the northern fells with the Mountain Goat company, which runs tours throughout Lakeland.

There are superb walks everywhere in the Lake District: around Buttermere and Coniston, over Helvellyn and around the Langdales, but one

not to miss is the full day tramp up Scafell Pike, at 978m (3,200ft) the highest mountain in England. A day up on Scafell, with sweeping views over the lakes below and a couple of well-earned pints at the Dungeon Ghyll Hotel on the way back... Try it.

NORTHERN PENNINES

This is hill-walking country, a place for cheerful people wearing serious boots. I walked there over the Roman road called High Street from Windermere to Askrank, and then on to Dufton, at the foot of the Pennines, both villages full of 17th-century cottages.

At Dufton I picked up the Pennine Way and followed it for 20 miles over the open hills around Crossfell to Alston, the highest market town in England. All these places have good pubs and inexpensive B&Bs, but the great attraction is outstandingly beautiful country, with a merciful absence of crowds.

DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY

Hadrian's Wall marked the end of my walk, before I headed back south. I crossed the Scottish border into Dumfries and Galloway and to Knockinam Lodge, a small

hotel at Portpatrick near Stranraer. Knockinam is on the beach, without another house in miles, with good food and an amazing array of malt whiskies in the bar. The main tourist attractions up here are golf and the Robbie Burns Country, but Knockinam is well off the too-well-beaten track in country where subtropical gardens are warmed by the Gulf Stream, where long empty beaches host flocks of seabirds and where, just a few miles across the ocean, are the green hills of Northern Ireland.

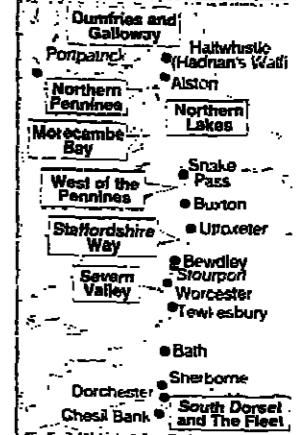
After four, hard weeks travelling across England on foot, it was magic.

The golden rule in the Lake District is to head for the high fells as soon as you arrive and avoid the whole place in summer when it becomes overcrowded. In early spring it is magnificent.

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GEOFF COWEN



FACT FILE

- B&B prices range from £16-£25 a night.
- The guide *The Staffordshire Way*, by Les Lumson and Chris Rushion, is published by Sigma Leisure, Wilmshaw, Cheshire (01625 531035) at £6.95.
- OS maps of routes and footpaths mentioned from bookshops or Stanfords Map Shop, 2-14 Long Acre, London WC2 (mail order, 0171-836 1321).
- Full information on Arnside, the Lake District and the north Pennines from the Cumbria Tourist Board, Ashleigh, Holly Road, Windermere (01539 444444).
- Details on crossing Morecambe Bay from Cedric Robinson, the Queen's Guide (01529 32165).
- Mountain Goat Tours, Windermere, 01539 445161. Laurel Cottage, Windermere, 01539 45594. Knockinam Lodge, Portpatrick, near Stranraer, 01776 810471. Severn Valley Guest House, Bewdley, 01299 402192. Green Ash Hotel, Delph, 01457 87035.
- Detailed information available at the tourist information centres in the places mentioned.

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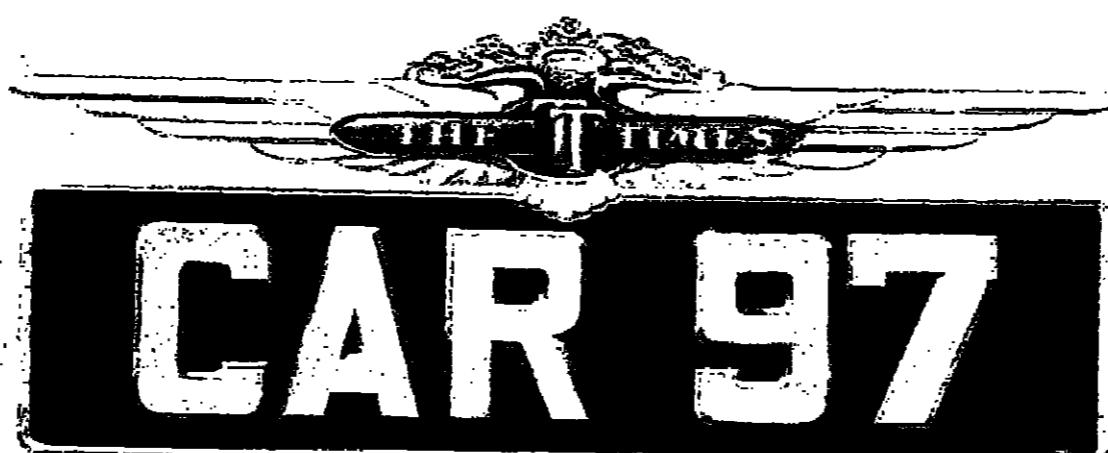
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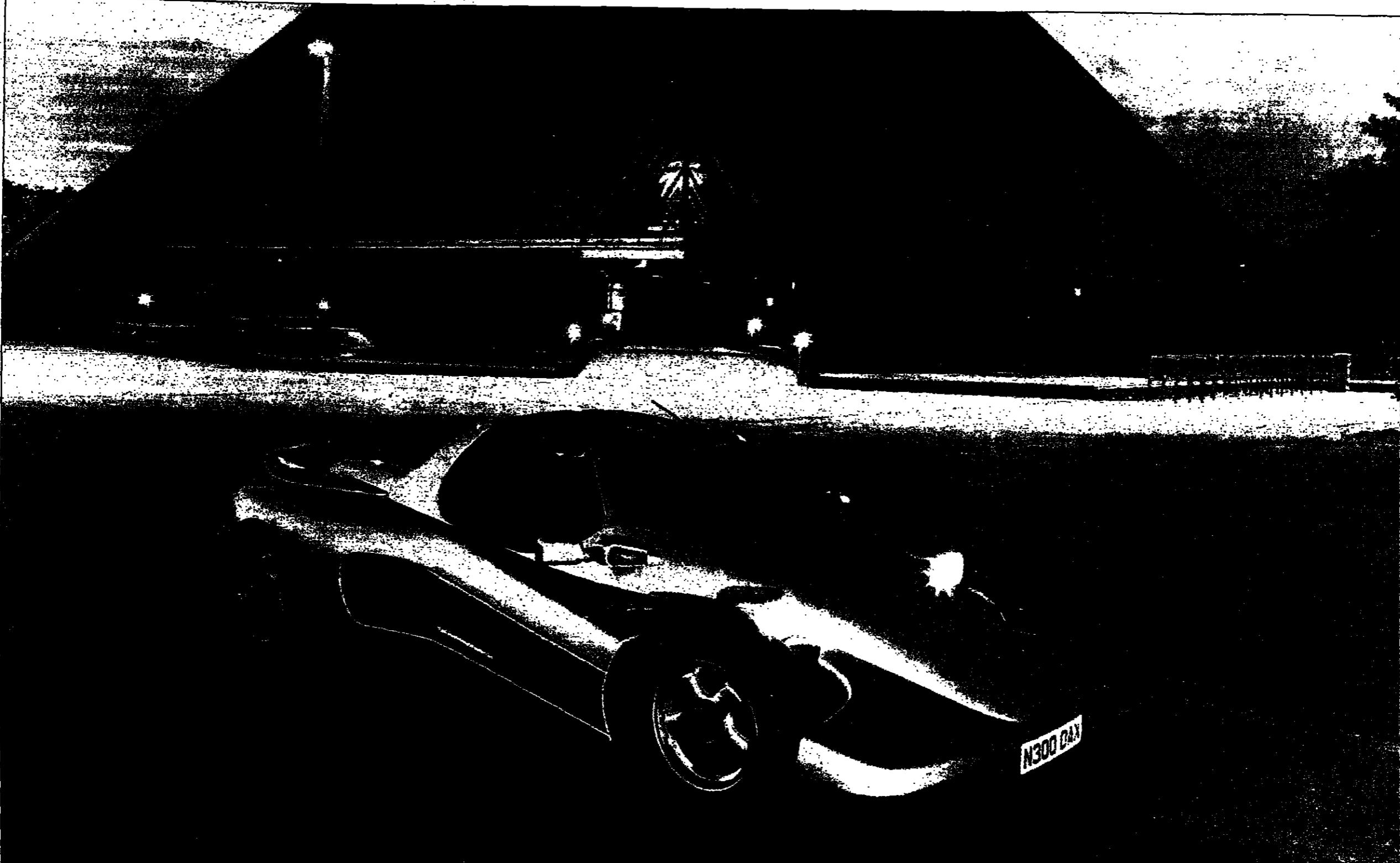
SATURDAY JANUARY 18 1997

The latest big ideas come from Toyota engineers

Page 8



Safely kitted out for the road



The Dax Kamala's sleek aluminium body is designed round a 2-litre, 340bhp Ford Cosworth turbo unit. It does 0-60mph in 3.9 seconds, about the same as a Ferrari F50, and has a top speed of over 150mph. Cost: about £12,000 plus your time

They offer style and performance with an affordable price tag. Now kit cars will have added official approval, reports Eve-Ann Prentice

The photograph above might look like the scene outside a powerbroker's office in downtown Dallas: the chief exec's supercar parked proudly outside the state-of-the-art building. In fact it's a kit car pictured outside a swimming pool in Bedford.

The kit car industry is largely based on selling two things that most of us think we can't afford: looks that can thrill and performance to make you gasp. The Dax Kamala in the picture has both: its sleek aluminium body is designed round a 2-litre, 340bhp Ford Cosworth turbo unit. It does 0-60mph in 3.9 seconds, about the same as a Ferrari F50, and has a top speed of over 150mph. It would cost you about £12,000 and several hours of careful assembly work.

Now the world of this and other customised cars is facing its biggest upheaval since the recession as new safety regulations come into force. Until now, most of these often eccentric vehicles needed no more than a standard MoT test before being allowed on the road. From July 1, however, all amateur-built and kit cars must undergo £200 safety checks before they can be registered for use.

The Kamala is produced by DJ Sports Cars of Harlow, Essex, which, like most kit car-makers, is keen to

embrace the safety rules. The car was designed by former Ford engineer, Peter Walker, who wanted to "produce something strikingly different". The project took four years from the first sketches to production last year and so far five have been made.

While it may seem astonishing that sometimes powerful machines have been allowed on the public highway without facing any safety checks, it is probably not belated common sense alone that has dictated the move. For the new regulation comes into force just five months before similar rules are to be applied throughout the European Community.

The new safety check, known as Single Vehicle Approval, will also apply to cars imported to Britain which are less than three years old and therefore do not have to undergo an MoT test.

The checks will be "far more rigorous than an MoT", according to a Department of Transport spokesman, and include inspections of steering, doors and latches, exhaust and smoke emissions, lamps and lights, mirrors, anti-theft devices, seats and seatbelts, brakes, silencers,

glass, tyres, interior fittings, bumpers, speedometers, odometers and wipers, as well as the vehicle's general design, weight and construction.

John Bowis, the Road Safety Minister, who announced the details just before Christmas, said: "The scheme will bring personally imported, amateur-built and kit car vehicles generally into line with mass-produced vehicles in meeting the high standards we expect, without placing an undue burden on individuals and small businesses."

The scheme has been greeted with enthusiasm by most in the industry, not least because companies producing the kits will also be allowed for the first time to sell up to 50 fully-assembled vehicles a year. Until now, manufacturers have been allowed to sell a maximum of just nine fully-built cars, all of which had to be on demonstration models.

The new system is also seen as giving the kit car industry official recognition by acknowledging that vehicles passing the checks are roadworthy. "The industry can see the benefits," says Ian Stent, Editor of

Which Kit? magazine. "It has emerged from the recession leaner, but fitter. You rarely see kit cars on the market now which are not pretty good quality."

Until the new rules come into force, there are two types of vehicle approval, both prohibitively expensive for small-scale manufacturers. The first is full EU-type approval which all mass car manufacturers' vehicles must undergo, and the second is a low-volume type designed for specialist marques producing fewer than 500 cars a year.

Mark Woolridge of the Association of Specialist Car Manufacturers, says: "The SVA will make it far more difficult for shoddy cars to get on the road and this will give us a seal of approval." Woolridge, who produces Quantum kit cars from his base in Birmingham, has already had his vehicles looked at. "We failed on a couple of minor things, such as hood catches which were slightly too sharp, and the exhaust, which had a sharp edge and was deemed to have been able to injure someone in an accident, but to put these things right only cost me £20-£25 per car."

Peter Filby, publisher and chairman of *Which Kit?* magazine, adds: "We British are very inventive and really started the kit car industry, though America was very close behind. There are thousands of men out there who want nothing more than to make their own motor car."

Why be boring when you can be seen in something Special?

With its huge front wings, roll cage, on-board fire extinguisher and low-slung stance, Colin Thompson's single-seater racer bears all the hallmarks of a Damon Hill-style Formula One machine, writes Vaughan Freeman.

The difference is that while the Thompson Special cost £4,000 all-in, a Formula One engine costs around £100,000, a set of brake discs and pads £7,000 and a chassis £50,000. Nevertheless, interest is high, with 42,000 people visiting the National Kit Car Show last May.

So is SVA good news all round?

The sad thing is it will knock out the real extremists producing weird and wonderful cars in their garages," says Stent.

Peter Filby, publisher and chairman of *Which Kit?* magazine, adds:

"We British are very inventive and really started the kit car industry, though America was very close behind. There are thousands of men out there who want nothing more than to make their own motor car."

The Thompson Special proves that in a world of

carbon-copy, safe and comfortable, but yawningly tedious modern cars, the home-grown machine is thriving as motorists, frustrated trying to buy the car they want off the shelf, build their own instead.

The Thompson Special is fully taxed, MoT'd, and insured. With headlights, indicators and number plates, it is fully road as well as race legal, which means its proud owner can drive it to a circuit, race, and then drive home again.

Thompson, 39, a former technician with Racal, built the car himself at home in New Malden, Surrey. The road to the Special started when he began a course learning how to race single-seater cars, and was bitten by the single-seater bug.

The trouble was, he could either go on taking lessons,

Continued on page 3

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Complaints from driving schools about reforms to the way learners are tested suggest there is still plenty of scope for improvement

It's time the test was privatised

A new driving test was introduced in July last year and six months later, on January 1 this year, a number of important changes were made to it. There is nothing wrong with revising a scheme, indeed fine tuning was bound to be needed, but I am mystified as to why the test methodology remains rooted in the era of the Model T (not that you had to pass a test then).

In *Car 97* last week, several driving schools which run intensive courses complained about one change, which involves the need to take a theory test before drivers can book, let alone take, a practical. This knocks seven bells out of intensive courses, which are predicated on getting through the whole grueling learning-testing process in a week. I sympathise with the

DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION



Peter Barnard

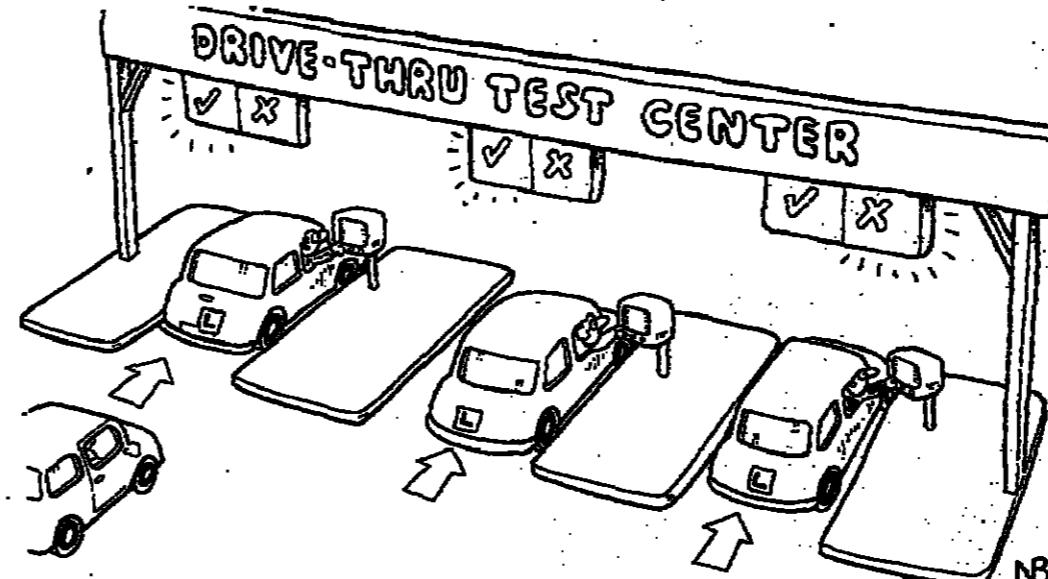
instructors, but their problems are not the only reason why changes ought to be made.

The theory test should be taken on a computer screen. Even computer-literate people could handle sitting in front of a terminal clicking on the answers in a

multiple-choice test, and the result would be available immediately.

There are two reasons why the present test is conducted with pen and paper and then taken away for marking. One is the cost of installing computers; the other is the legal requirement that the driving test be "equally accessible to all candidates". Of course, there are people, especially elderly people, who are intimidated by computers. But because some people have to take the test on paper does not mean everyone has to; a combination of methods can be used. That leaves the cost argument, though I doubt whether putting a basic computer in every test centre would cost any more than employing an army of people to print, distribute and mark test papers.

Still, let us suppose that cost is a real problem. There is plenty of



who think that unless they get on with a more technological approach, the pressure to privatise will increase. This is why I fully expect the theory test to be conducted on computer screens within five years. But a change of government is only five months away and Tony Blair will quickly face the fact that promises cost money.

The privatisation of the driving test by a Labour government would be among the greatest ironies. A Thatcherite principle given its ultimate expression. But I would not bet against it happening and I hope that it does.

■ Alan Cops and myself will shortly force ourselves to eat a decent lunch for once while we pore over your hundreds of entries for the competition to give the Ford Ka a decent nickname. The champion will be announced in a week or two. Meanwhile, my thanks to the ten people from my eldest daughter's office who submitted suggestions, knowing of course that I would never live down allowing them into the competition proper. I expect my daughter suggested Ford Katskrope because she drives a Vauxhall, but Laurie Stewart's Ford Ka has a nice ring to it.

money and plenty of sophisticated technology in industry, so the answer is to privatisate the driving test. Now get up off the floor and listen to the logic.

The test is already half privatised. Although it is administered by the Driving Standards Agency, the day to day running of the test was put out to tender and

DriveSafe Services Ltd won the contract. There is no reason why the DSA should not continue to have a regulatory role, with the private sector running the tests and putting up the money in exchange for potential profits.

Organisations like the Institute of Advanced Motorists, the AA and the RAC — as well as

DriveSafe — could be encouraged to form consortia to bid for the test. I see no reason why leading driving schools should not join these consortia: the argument that they have a pecuniary interest in test results is made irrelevant by the fact that failing candidates is bad for their reputations.

There are those within the DSA

PETER TREVOR



New regulations for the caravan towing test are complicated, but the Caravan Club can offer newcomers expert advice on safety measures and how to avoid the pitfalls

Before we start, who are you?

Drivers fail the pressure test

When low inflation can cause disaster

MILLIONS of motorists are running an unnecessary risk of an accident this winter through poorly inflated tyres, according to a survey of more than 2,000 cars, writes Alan Cops.

Nine out of ten cars inspected were found to have at least one tyre wrongly inflated and 14 per cent of those were so badly wrong as to jeopardise handling and control. If the sample was representative of the 22 million car population, that means three million drivers are running around on potentially lethal wheels, says the RAC.

The most alarming conclusion of the survey was that almost a third of motorists never check their tyre pressures. The Association of Chief Police Officers, which has joined the

Tread Safely campaign, points out that driving with defective tyres is an offence leading to a possible £2,500 fine.

The survey was carried out for the National Tyre Distributors' Association, which is offering a free inflation service and tyre pressure advice at all its 2,800 member centres across the country. Half those asked said they knew the recommended pressures, but only one in four said they checked them weekly, which is regarded as a safe minimum.

Edmund King, head of campaigns for the RAC, said: "Tyres must not be forgotten simply because they do not trigger warning lights in the dashboard. They are the only contact a car has with the road."

Candidates for both the theory and the practical driving tests will have to provide photographic proof of their identity from March 1 in an attempt to stamp out cheating.

The Driving Standards Authority, which administers the tests, is concerned that in some parts of the country candidates are sending along older relatives or more experienced drivers to take the test in their place and ensure a pass.

The new rule will be announced within the next few weeks. *Car 97* has been told.

A number of prosecutions have been brought against people for impersonating candidates. Inquiries have established that the practice is more prevalent in certain parts of Britain, mainly inner-city areas. Examiners have been trained to spot tell-tale signs, such as middle-aged people, apparently taking the test for the first time.

The acceptable forms of photographic proof are expected to include passports and employee identity cards.

The move follows a series of revisions to the driving tests for cars, motorcycles and

Alan Copps and Eve-Ann Prentice on beating the driving test cheats and learning to tow your caravan in safety

heavier vehicles which came into force on January 1. The DSA has been criticised for not publicising these changes sufficiently. The main change means that candidates for all forms of driving licence must now pass a theory test before they can apply for a practical test.

The new driving test rules have also focused attention on the growing number of courses to help those baffled or intimidated by the changes. Some of the latest are aimed at caravan-owners and prospective car drivers who may need special help to get through the theory test.

Learned car drivers and motorcyclists who are worried about the theory test can now take special courses at Theory Learning Centres which are being set up around the country.

The centres, the brainchild of Jon Gross, a former development manager of the Motor Schools' Association, offer an unusual "guaranteed pass"

policy. If any new driver fails the theory test after taking the course, he or she can return for as many free lessons as it takes them to pass. A complete course of twenty 45-minute lessons costs £120. For information telephone 0121-244 0442.

The new caravan rules are complicated. Licence-holders who passed their driving tests before January 1 are not affected, but anyone learning now needs to pass a towing test if the weight of their vehicle and trailer or caravan combination is more than 3,500kg. People who want to tow less than that combined weight need not take the towing test, provided the trailer does not weigh more fully laden than the empty towing vehicle.

The towing test involves a simple reverse S manoeuvre similar to that taken by large goods vehicle drivers, and a hitching and unhitching test.

The Caravan Club is running a series of courses that begin in March and caravans are provided.

All the participants have to provide a car fitted with towing bracket and electrics, plus extension mirrors if the existing car mirrors will not give an adequate rear view down the sides of the caravan, says a spokesman.

The one-and-a-half day practical caravanning course for the less experienced costs £55 and a one-day manoeuvring course for those with "manoeuvring difficulties only" is £45. For more information contact the Caravan Club's Events department on 01342 326944.

More advice for caravaners will be available at the Caravan Leisure Home Show at Manchester's G-Mex centre from next Thursday to Sunday. Officials from the Caravan Club, Greater Manchester Police and the RAC will be on hand to give information about the new test requirements, the best tow cars and safety and security.

Unsuitable tow cars, poor loading of caravans and insufficient attention to mirrors when towing are among the faults blamed by police for accidents involving caravans.

Although towing a caravan for the first time can be daunting for many drivers, the Caravan Council says many pitfalls can be overcome through following a few simple rules.

First, it is important to match your car to the weight of the caravan, which for the less experienced should not exceed 85 per cent of the car's kerbside weight.

However, engine capacity and gearing are also crucial and this is one reason why expert advice should be sought.

The noseweight of the caravan also needs to be checked against the recommended noseweight for the tow car.

In loading it is important to keep the weight in the caravan low down and as close to the axle as possible. Emptying water tanks and toilets helps reduce weight.

The alignment of car and caravan is also vital.

They should be level when viewed from the side. Mirrors

should be set wide enough to see right down the sides of the caravan and, if they fail this test, extension mirrors should be fitted before setting off.

Box Office for *Caravan Show* 0171-373 3733.

SCOTLAND A937 Montrose, Angus. Roadworks and restrictions in both directions on Hillside.

M8 Edinburgh. Major roadworks, with lane closures on the roundabout at Junction 2 (Newbridge Spur, M9).

M8 Glasgow. Overnight (8pm-6am) eastbound entry slip roads closed for roadworks at Charing Cross and Great Western Road.

A92 Tay Road Bridge, Dundee. Maintenance work in place at the bridges. Also lane closures southbound.

A9 Greenloaning, Perth & Kinross. Contrailor four miles east of Dunblane.

WALES A482 Aberaeron. Cardigan. Upper Aberaeron Bridge on South Road is closed for reconstruction work.

A470 north of Cenfford, Merthyr Tydfil. Temporary lights at junction 25 (Wigan) and 27 (Standish) with a 50mph limit.

M53 Merseyside. Bridge maintenance work at junction 2 (Birkenhead) with only one lane open each way on the Mersey Spur.

M1 West Yorkshire. Long-term roadworks continue around the Leeds junction with lane and speed restrictions. Delays on the M1, M62 and Dewsbury Road.

NORTH M6 Cheshire. One lane closed each way over the Theakwell Viaduct.

M6 Greater Manchester. Bridge maintenance work between junctions 25 (Wigan) and 27 (Standish) with a 50mph limit.

M62 Staffordshire, Stoke area. Contrailor with only one lane open each way between Telford (A52) and Longport (A527 Port Sunlight).

M6 West Midlands. Major roadworks at junction 2 Dudley (A4034/A4123 Oldbury) closing southbound entry and northbound exit slip roads.

SOUTH-EAST A330 Ascot, Berkshire. Roadworks to widen the road and make a new roundabout. Temporary lights in place.

M40 Buckinghamshire. Long-term roadworks with a contrailor between junction 1a (M25) and junction 3 (Witcombe East).

A27 Brighton. Overnight (10pm-6am) maintenance work on the Brighton bypass between the Hangleton Junction and Ditchling Road Bridge.

M27 Hampshire. Long-term roadworks with lane closures and a contrailor at times between junction 8 (Southampton) and junction 10 (Fareham).

A2 Canterbury. Roadworks and various lane closures in both directions for bridge maintenance.

M25 Surrey. Restrictions and lane closures both ways between Godstone and the A3 as major widening work continues.

SOUTH-WEST A35 Christchurch, Dorset. Bypass. Lane closure between Fountain Way and Stour Lane roundabout.

M32 Gloucestershire. Long-term roadworks with southbound contrailor at peak times between junction 1 (Bristol Ring Road), Hambrook and junction 2 (Stapleton).

M5 Gloucestershire. Major roadworks and restrictions in both directions on Hillside.

M8 Edinburgh. Major roadworks, with lane closures on the roundabout at Junction 2 (Newbridge Spur, M9).

M8 Glasgow. Overnight (8pm-6am) eastbound entry slip roads closed for roadworks at Charing Cross and Great Western Road.

A38 Salisbury, Wiltshire. Lane closures both ways on New Barn Road at Ham.

At Alconbury, Cambridge.

SCOTLAND A937 Montrose, Angus. Roadworks and restrictions in both directions on Hillside.

M8 Edinburgh. Major roadworks, with lane closures on the roundabout at Junction 2 (Newbridge Spur, M9).

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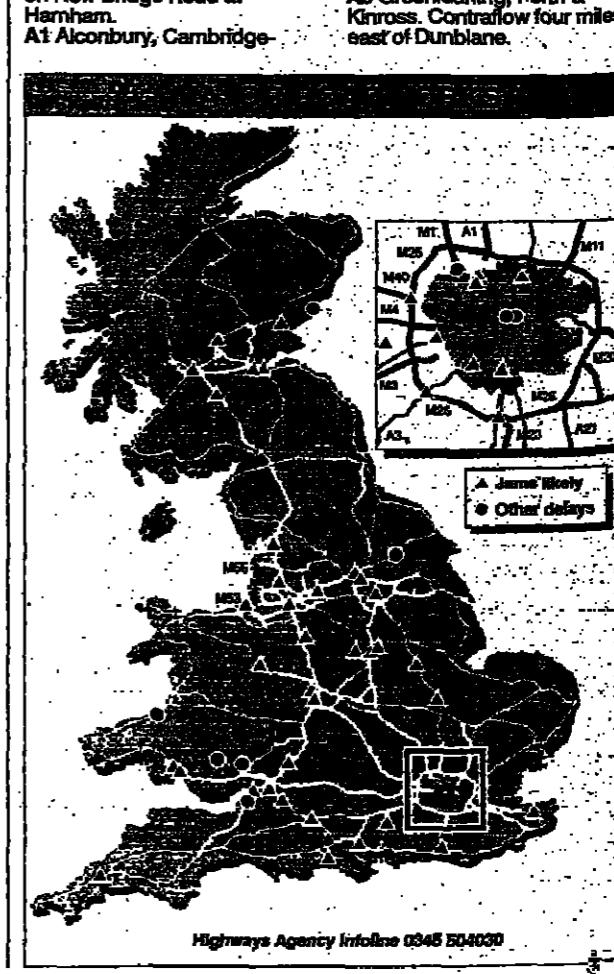
AUTOFAX by David Long and Les Evans

FOR A RACE IN 1902, CHARLES JARRATT REPAIRED HIS CAR USING BITS OF AN HOTEL BEDSIDE TABLE WHICH HE HAD SMUGGLED OUT IN HIS TROUSERS...

5,000 bhp and 5,000 lbs ft of torque mean a top fuel dragster will reach 300 mph in less than five seconds.

WITH 1,500,000 CARS RUNNING ROUND LONDON DAILY, VAUXHALL CROSS IS RECKONED TO BE THE BUSIEST ROAD JUNCTION IN EUROPE...

THE HIGHEST PRICE PAID EVER FOR CORGI'S VERSION OF THE JAMES BOND ASTON MARTIN DB5 IS £1,500.



Opera star Della Jones tells Alasdair Steven about her quest to discover a very rare and elusive animal

Has anyone seen a Qwunkalumpas?

STEERING COLUMN

If you have heard a rather fine soprano trilling in the car next to you when you pulled up at traffic lights recently, it could have been Della Jones. She likes to practise at the wheel for her lead role in Rossini's *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, which opens tonight at the Coliseum in London.

In reality, she is a girl who is proud of her Welsh origins and has made it to the top of the international operatic tree. She has sung the most demanding mezzo-soprano roles in the world's leading opera houses as well as "doing" the Last Night of the Proms in 1993 and making many records. After studying at the Royal College of Music, she won, among other prizes, the Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Scholarship.

She has sung with all the UK opera companies, especially Welsh National and English National. She sang the demanding role of Baba The Turk in the acclaimed Welsh National production of Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* which was brought triumphantly last year to Covent Garden. She has often appeared at the Geneva Opera House and "the gorgeous" La Fenice in Venice. She continues a hectic concert and recital schedule. Tonight's English National Opera production of *The Italian Girl in Algiers* by Howard Davies presents her with a hugely demanding role but one she knows well, having sung it at Nantes two years ago.

How did you first learn to drive?

In a square yellow thing. I think it was called a Hillman Minx. I learnt on an automatic and have always driven an automatic. I soon realised after becoming an opera singer that rehearsal rooms and theatres are far apart. I was rehearsing *Carmen* for the ENO and that involved several changes of tubes etc. So I gritted my teeth and passed the test first time. I was

fearless then. Hyde Park Corner and the like never worried me. High streets with drivers trying to find a parking place are more of a trial.

What was your first car?

An Austin Maestro. I was doing Opera North, WNO and ENO all at once, so I had to learn the motorways of Britain fast. But everything that could go wrong with that car — it was new — went wrong. It broke down everywhere. Eventually I had a wonderful relationship with a Mike Capon in British Leyland's complaints office. I rang up reversed charges and told him where I was and he sent out a mechanic. This went on for six months. It broke down for good in Swansea and ENO offered me either my money back or a new car.

What car do you drive now?

We have two, a Volvo Estate and Citroën BX. My husband is a sound recordist, so we choose whichever is the most suitable for the day. The Citroën is always full of clutter. Mostly my seven-year-old's.

Do you enjoy driving?

I love it. I put on Radio 4 and listen away. With that I can cope with traffic jams, snarls-ups and motorway gridlocks no trouble at all.

What is your dream car?

Bright egg yolk colour. Any make. But it has to have wings when I drive my son to school we pretend the car has wings so that he isn't late. I confess that stretch limos are quite fun in the States, but I wouldn't pay for them every day of the year.

What is your most hated car?

One that breaks down.

What is your worst habit in a car?

Singing. Loudly. I do occasionally shout at other drivers, but I love sitting there making up cadenzas for a Handel or Rossini aria. Other drivers at traffic lights look amazed, but I carry on.



PETER TREVOR

Della Jones: "I occasionally shout at other drivers, but I love sitting there making up cadenzas for a Handel or Rossini aria. Other drivers at traffic lights look amazed, but I carry on."

on a motorway. Then there's the awful bunch who delight in coming up very close on an open but twisty road and, because they know the road, flash their lights and honk their horns.

What infuriates you most about other drivers?

That they exist. Drivers who hog your backside and flash

son and I were being driven to a concert in Spain and got caught up in the most horrendous traffic jam. We had to change into our party frocks in the back of the car. We gave strict instructions to the taxi driver to keep his eyes to the front. We arrived on time and looking great. My son and I often go out for drives in search of the Qwunkalumpas,

a rare breed of animal which no one else has heard of. We are the only people who know about them or can see them! It's also our word and no one else has heard about this rare breed. We can be driving along and he will suddenly shout "Mummy, there's a Qwunkalumpas!". So I stop and we rush off. We do our

driving. Have you any points on your licence?

No. I am a good girl, I am.

What do you listen to on your car radio/cassette while driving?

I am hooked on Radio 4, as I said. The rule in this house is that the dial must remain on

Radio 4. If I am driving home after a concert or performance, I listen to the World Service, which I always try to catch when I am abroad.

What is your worst/favourite car advertisement?

Never look or listen to them. I can't even think of one. I'm just not interested.

An ace Blackjack from a Citroën 2CV

Continued from page 1 and run out of money without any promise of winning, a drive in someone else's car at the end of it all, or cut the lessons short and instead build his own single-seater to practise in.

"I had about £1,300 to spare when I started," he says. "I spent £450 on a 2.3-litre Granada Estate. The bills mounted though, as £500 went on building the steel chassis and aluminium body panels, and £1,700 on 'bits and pieces'. The only part of the car Thompson could not make was the roll frame which had to be made to race specification.

The Thompson Special will reach a top 124mph, and has a 0-60mph time of well under six seconds, depending on gearing. Thompson says: "It has a four speed gearbox, and to change the gearing I use bigger rear wheels on racing circuits for a higher top speed, and smaller rear wheels on hill climbs to improve the acceleration."

If the car is fun on the road, it is positively exhilarating on the track: "I have driven it a number of times at Goodwood, and had my trickiest moment just after I had put in the 2.8-litre engine. I was going through the curve where Stirling

Moss had his big accident and I was doing about 115mph when suddenly the back started to weave around. When you lose control at 115mph for the first time, I can tell you it is quite exhilarating."

We might not be thrilled by such a



The Oakes Blackjack Avion: "an antidote to technology"

rather than articulated trucks were the driver's companion. Reminiscent of pre-war cars such as the three-wheeler Morgan, it is based around, of all things, the wheezing innards of the Citroën 2CV, all 602cc and 30bhp of it.

With a powerplant more Jane than Tarzan, no roof, an air deflector rather than a full windscreen, three wheels instead of four, and room only for two, the Blackjack is a long way from the cossetting modern saloon.

Richard Oakes, who studied at the Royal College of Art and worked for Ford, is an independent

automotive designer who has worked with small independent car makers as well as established names like Aston Martin.

"The Blackjack is built around the 2CV, which is not a very fast car, but the Blackjack is much lighter than the original Citroën 2CV, and people feel very warmly towards the 2CV," he says.

"This is not an out and out sports car. It is a 'country lane' car, a low-tech alternative for people looking for an antidote to technology. It nips along, it works very well, is quite charming, and quality engineering has gone into it."

Oakes believes that interest in such cars stems from the need to find motoring fun: "I am nearly 50 years old, and 20 years ago would have classed myself as a car nut. Then at least the roads were full of interesting cars. Today, those cars that are interesting are either very expensive, or are older cars and bring with them all the problems of restoration."

The Blackjack is his alternative. Customers need to find a donor 2CV — an MOT failure, which can be bought for as little as £100, is fine, as the chassis is not needed. The engine, steering, brakes and front suspension are the key elements.

These are married to the Blackjack Avion kits, available from the most basic £275 pack right up to the luxury £4,500 package which includes everything from subframes and moulded bodywork to handbuilt steel wheels and hand-stitched leather interior.

Oakes says: "Building one requires no specialist knowledge of wiring or of welding. People want different things, but we calculate it should take only three or four weekends to put a car together."



Thomson in his Special: fun on the road, exhilarating on the track

NEWS IN BRIEF

Europe gears up

CAR SALES increased in every country in Western Europe in 1996, according to provisional figures. The biggest increases were in two of the smallest countries — Norway, up 38 per cent, and Ireland, up 32 per cent. The average increase was 6.6 per cent. The smallest increases were in Italy, just 0.3 per cent, Switzerland, up 2.5 per cent, and Britain, where sales of 2,025,500 represented a 4.1 per cent gain.

Through a glass darkly

DRIVERS who don't wear their glasses behind the wheel either through vanity or forgetfulness could put other road users at risk, says the AA. A study of 6,000 motorists found that of those needing glasses only 16 per cent of men wore them compared to 23 per cent of women. It is estimated that one in four drivers need glasses. "Sharp vision is essential to road safety, particularly during winter when poor weather and low light can lead to eye strain," said Andrew Howard, AA head of road safety.

Multi-coloured Lexus

CUSTOMERS for Lexus, the luxury cars made by Toyota, have persuaded the company to change its policy on colours and trim. They can now have any combination of exterior and interior colour rather than the limited choices previously on offer. The company says cars will be built to individual order. The most popular exterior colours in 1996 were Aspen Green and Cashmere Gold.

Marcos I up for sale

THE FIRST Marcos ever built, commissioned in 1959 for Jackie Stewart, is to be sold by Brooks at its sale of collectors' cars and automobilia at London's Olympia on February 22. It was restored by the company's founder, Jim Marsh, in 1976 and raced successfully in historic events for many years.

AA backs MP on bull bars

BULL BARS should be banned, said the AA as it gave a welcome to the Ten Minute rule Bill to outlaw the notorious accessories for off-roaders, introduced by Paul Flynn, MP for Newport West, in the Commons on Tuesday. Latest figures from the Transport Research Laboratory suggest that estimates of deaths due to bull bars have been overstated in the past and they can only be blamed with certainty for about three fatalities and 40 injuries a year. "That's still three deaths too many," said the AA.

Volvo raises the roof

THE FIRST open-top Volvo for 40 years was unveiled at the Detroit Motor Show this month, a convertible version of the C70 Coupé, which will star in the new *Saint* film. It will be powered by a turbocharged 5-cylinder engine and the chassis has been developed with the help of TWR, who run Volvo's touring car race team.



Volvo's new C70 Coupé: a Saintly conversion after 40 years

FIFTY YEARS OF MAKING KIT CARS

• THE KIT car is deemed by enthusiasts to be 50 years old this year, half as old as the motor car itself. In 1947, Derek Buckler took the first steps in making his own car by making a space frame chassis and began production a year or so later.

• ABOUT 5,000 kit cars, worth on average £5,000 to £6,000 each, are now made in Britain every year, of which 20 per cent are exported.

• PROBABLY the most famous and widely sold kit car was the Lotus 7. Created by the company's founder, Colin Chapman, in 1957, it has been produced in one form or another ever since. The manufacturing rights are now held by Caterham, who sponsor race series for the car in five countries.

• ONE main exporter is the Lomax Motor Company based in Halesowen, West Midlands.

which sells 15 to 20 of its three-wheeler kit cars abroad every month. The models, costing £3,000-£5,000, are popular in France, Belgium and Holland.

• THE Association of Specialist Car Manufacturers is an umbrella organisation of some of the main kit car-makers. For more information, contact association members Mark Woolridge on 01384 834422 or Peter Bailey on 01308 897072.

• WHICH KIT? magazine can be contacted on 01737 222030.

• THE NEW safety checks for kit and amateur-built cars will be "far more rigorous than an MOT", according to the Department of Transport.

• ABOUT 150 companies make kit cars in Britain, but only 60 or so produce more than 20 cars a year from dedicated premises and only four or five make over 150 cars a year.

Helen Mound learns some tricks of the trade from a company that offers any colour — and 500 shades of black

The complex art of painting your wagon



Colour me incompetent: Helen Mound, in compulsory full protective gear, starts on her ill-advised freehand attempt to reproduce Car 97 with stencil plastic and spray paint...

Take me to your leader. I wish to learn to flip-flop. Then I will fade in, blend and fade out. Once I've mastered this, I'll try a full edge-to-edge respray."

PPG Industries, the largest car paint producer in the world, is accustomed to this curious request. It runs one of Britain's leading car painting schools, and flip-flop, fading, blending and edge-to-edge spraying are four of the techniques it teaches to car dealers' and garage bodyshops' paint technicians.

I might look like something from outer space in the full protective gear, which includes breathing equipment, but inside the PPG Auto Refinish Training Centre in Birmingham everyone dresses like this. The fumes alone could overpower you in the spray booth, and smoking or using a mobile phone is forbidden within 100 yards of the centre for fear of an explosion.

Most people think that car paint is black and white — plus a few other colours — but the technology has become so complex that the Refinish Centre provides 52 different courses, covering subjects from warranty repair to specialist techniques such as fading (where one colour blends to another without an obvious join).

Otherwise known as Pittsburgh Plate Glass, PPG Industries has been around for more than a century. Having started in plate glass in 1883 in the United States, it swiftly added automotive paints to its manufacturing abilities when the car industry took off 100 years ago. Today annual sales exceed \$7 billion (£4.2 billion) and all the world's major car producers use the company's "automotive coatings technology", including Ford, Toyota, Rover, Fiat, Nissan, Saab, BMW and Daewoo.

The trains on London's Underground are finished in PPG's graffiti-resistant paint and when the Shuttle was pulled out from the Channel tunnel after the fire last year, PPG's heat-resistant paint was still intact while everything else was singed.

But PPG's main business is in the automotive industry and it has developed a close link between original paints for car factories and *refinish* products for bodyshops. The company understands the problems involved in paint repairs outside a factory environment, reproducing complicated colours in bodyshops and repairing complex finishes, which is why it opened the Refinish Training Centre.

The man in charge of the operation is Bob Magee, otherwise known as the Pearly King (for the colours I can



... only to be told by Bob Magee, left, that "letters and figures are the hardest to reproduce and should only really be tackled after a lot of practice"

create with pearl paints that most people think are impossible".

Magee has been in car paints for 30 years, and knows how to make a new car design look its best using colour and how to get the best colours out of new paint technology. When the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders commissioned its "Concept Car 97" for last year's Motor Show, Magee was asked to "finish it in something that didn't look like paint".

With the help of three other paint technicians, he completed the task in three days. The result was a glass-looking finish hailed by the industry as an impressive success.

Mixing paints and experimenting with colours is Magee's favourite part of his job, and he spent a day teaching me the tricks of the trade.

Paints currently fall into four basic categories: metallics (using flecks of aluminium that can vary in size and colour); micas (also known as

pearls, using transparent spheres that vary in size and colour); lenticulars (similar to micas, but the particles are oval-shaped to create greater reflections, which result in brighter colours); and good old-fashioned flats (that benefit from ever-improving pigments to produce brighter yellows and reds).

Flip-flop — also known as "three-stage pearls" — is a name for a technique using mica paints. First a basic colour is applied, then a mica to provide a pearlescent effect, and then a coloured glaze.

The fumes alone could overpower you in the booth

line. With a mix of sunburst orange, flame red and light yellow pearl, I'd made a paint that looked absolutely wonderful in the tin, but provided very little coverage and needed to be applied to my door panel six times before it would work.

Magee advised that to get the finished result I was aiming for I should have applied a coat of orange first for good coverage, then my colour for the effect and, finally, glaze to increase the pearl-look.

The fumes have taught him how to identify the paint needed to flatten the lines of a car. He tells me how my pearlescent paint would look dull on a Rover Metro, but bright if applied to a Volkswagen Beetle because of its curved shape.

The practical side of my day's course was fun, but difficult. A steady hand is

needed to apply the paint evenly with a spray gun fins from the door panel, which I didn't find a problem. But it all went horribly wrong when I attempted some freehand work. I'm clearly not a natural with a spray gun, so I went for what I thought was the simple approach, cutting the figures "Car 97" out of some stencil plastic.

Somehow I don't think it will make it as this year's logo. Magee pointed out, after I'd spent two painstaking hours painting the stencil, that "letters and figures are the hardest to reproduce and should only really be tackled after a lot of practice".

The centre trains 900 students a year from paint distributors, car dealerships and bodyshops. Courses cost £100 a day. And if you still think that car paint technology is all black and white, consider the fact that PPG now has 500 different versions of black on its palette.

Q My husband and I are about to change our car and I know we will end up having the same old argument about its colour.

A Well, it is usually imprudent to interfere between husband and wife ... is there a serious point here?

Q My husband is a bit of a fuddy-duddy and, like Henry Ford, thinks I should be happy with every colour available as long as it is black. I would like a cheerful red for a change. Isn't black harder to see on the road?

A Actually, anecdotal evidence suggests that green cars are involved in more accidents than those of any other colour. But black is unlucky when it comes to theft.

Q Really? You see, my husband is not as young as he was and I was more worried that he would not be seen as clearly as he might. I didn't realise that colour could affect theft.

A It appears to. The chance of having your car stolen or broken into is 20 per

YOUR CAR'S COLOUR CAN FADE

Out of fashion and in the red

Buying a car in a trendy colour could be expensive. You might love the popular vivid greens, sparkling yellows or violent purples now, but don't be fooled into thinking they will always be appealing, writes Helen Mound.

Manufacturers are striving to offer ever more attractive colours, but customers are discovering that choosing the wrong one can be a costly mistake. Dealers say that motorists looking for trade-ins on their cars in fashionable colours usually get lower deals. An Aprilia Volkswagen Polo or Explorist Yellow Fiat Punto can lose as much as £400 compared to the second-hand prices of more sober-coloured models.

Executives who pick Turquoise for their Jaguar XJR are likely to be penalised by a trade-in £1,000 less than those with dark metallic paintwork. A BMW in a non-metallic colour can lose between £300 and £400 in value, and Land Rovers in anything other than dark blues and earthy metallics can depreciate as much as an extra £1,000. One dealer would even avoid taking a Range Rover in Sahara Desert (bright metallic gold) as a trade-in. Despite being only a year since Land Rover dropped the

colour from its range, he felt it would be hard to sell. Garish colours are usually used to boost interest in slow sellers and new models. When Hyundai launched the Accent in the UK, it was offered in Scarlet Red (a vivid pink), but two years later Accents in that colour suffer greater depreciation than the more subtle shades.

Experts advise picking the colour that suits the car. Metallic blues or dark greens are considered appropriate for a BMW, metallic silver or blue for a Mercedes-Benz and Audi, and second-hand Ford Mondeos should preferably be in blue or red.

The current colour trend for mass-produced models is metallic blues, dark greens, burgundies and silvers. If you must pick a flat colour, red is the best seller, followed by blue.

Clearly the most cost-effective option you can pick for your new car is metallic paint, its positive effect on second-hand prices far outweighing that of options such as airbags and anti-lock brakes. Most manufacturers charge between £200 and £300 for metallic paint on a new car, but a second-hand car in metallic paint can fetch £500 more than an identical model in a flat colour.

SOME SHADES TO BE SEEN IN



RADIANT RED



ASH BLACK



SLATE BLUE



DARK AUBERGINE

■ Ten cars and their best colours: Alfa Romeo Spider — Alfa Red; Proteo Red; Audi A4 — Aluminium Silver, Emerald Green; Ford Mondeo — Slate Blue, Nouveau Red; Jaguar XJ6 — Ice Blue, Sherwood Green; Land Rover Discovery — Ningara Green, Epsom Green; Mazda MX-5 — Classic Red; British Racing Green; Mercedes C-class — Brilliant Silver, Azurite Blue; Porsche 911 — Midnight Blue, Polar Silver; Rover 200 — Nightfire Red, British Racing Green; Volkswagen Polo — Dragon Green, Diamond Black.

■ Ten colours that lose money: Ford Probe — Applemist; Volkswagen Polo — Apricot; Ford Mondeo — Si Cirrine Yellow; Fiat Punto — Explorist Yellow; Seat Ibiza/Cordoba — Kiwi Yellow; Nissan Primera — Linden Green; Vauxhall Calibra — Pineapple Yellow; Range Rover — Sahara Desert; Hyundai Accent — Scarlet Red; Jaguar XJR — Turquoise.

A study in scarlet vision

DR DASHBOARD

cent greater if it is black, according to a survey by Admiral insurance. But that doesn't mean red is best for deterring the villains. Based on a survey of 10,000 claims, the findings showed that gold, yellow or brown cars are far less popular with thieves than other colours.

■ I still want to go for red, as long as it is not a magnet for joy-riders or anything like that.

■ Admiral's marketing manager, Kate Armstrong says: "We had expected red to attract joy-riders, so were surprised to see it was less risky than black."

■ So what about red being more easily seen? Any evidence to show that bright colours are safer?

■ What seems to be more important is how good your husband's eyesight is. The British Safety Council's research shows that one in 14 older drivers have difficulty reading traffic signs.

CAR MART 1: ROAD TEST SPECIAL ON VAUXHALL'S DESIGNS TO MATCH YOUR LIFESTYLE

Dramatic change to the estate we're in

Alan Copps finds a thoughtful challenge aimed at some excellent opposition

Some cars are better as estates than they are as saloons. They have to be because where once the "load higger" was simply a variation of a basic model for people who needed more space, in the modern world of niche marketing the estate faces a tough struggle against the multi-seated people mover and the versatile off-roader.

The estate as a "driver's car" offering performance to satisfy the enthusiast as well as space to carry a wardrobe is a relatively new concept, helped along by Volvo's success with estates in touring car racing and the sexy image of things such as the BMW Touring. In its top-of-the-range Vectra Sri estate with its lively 2-litre engine Vauxhall has not only brought the idea to a more affordable part of the market but wrought a great improvement in the car itself.

In the past few years the medium sector of the market, the mainstay of the company car driver, has seen an extraordinarily good series of models emerge from major manufacturers.

Ford's Mondeo, much trumpeted as the "world car", led the way. The highly-praised Peugeot 405 upped the ante and the Vectra showed just how hard the giants of the business were trying in this sector. The Vectra is certainly a good car, but for most direct competitors are excellent. As a hatchback or saloon it doesn't quite match the dynamics of the other two, its cabin feels more cramped and its ride a bit lumpy.

But in its estate version the car feels quite different, both from the driver's and the passenger's point of view. Extra space at the rear gives an impression of more space throughout. In fact, although the cabin and controls and especially the seats have been improved, physical space is the same as in the

ROADTEST 1

saloon version. But in these things, no matter how deep the marketing men delve into their dictionaries of superlatives, the driver's impression is a great deal more significant than any measurements.

More importantly, especially for passengers, the estate features a new multi-link rear suspension

mounted on a subframe completely separate from the main structure of the car and is insulated from it by four large bushes. This matches the arrangement at the front end, where engine, front suspension and steering also have their own subframe. One aim of this change, together with improved noise damping, was to reduce the amount of "booming" and vibration which so often reverberates through the wide open spaces of an estate car. But with the sophisticated linkage of the suspension what it also does is to immeasurably improve ride and comfort.

To make sure this improvement

is felt at all times, and to ensure

good grip during the snowy

weather was exceptional, helped

by the anti-lock brakes and the

traction control system surprisingly fitted as standard in the 2-litre and 2.5-litre V6 engines versions.

The traction control operates on both the engine management computer and directly on the brakes to prevent wheelspin. In action is entirely automatic, but a dashboard tell-tale lets the driver know when it is in action. On icy roads even driving in what felt like the gentlest way it was instructive to notice just how frequently the TC light flicked on, even though only in extreme circumstances could its effect be felt through the controls.

To find such a useful safety device on such a popular car shows how much thought went in to the Vectra estate's design.

This car cannot justify the usual estate-style claims about a world-beating load space. But in every other respect it puts the Vectra on a par with its competition.

All this makes the Sri an unexpected pleasure to drive. The steering is precise, handling pre-



Vectra estate: not a world beater on space, but in every other respect on a par with its competition, giving immeasurably improved ride and comfort over the saloon version

Packed with extras for all occasions

ROADTEST 2

IF YOU are aged 40 or thereabouts, married, have children, and are prepared to spend that little bit extra for a more powerful engine and higher equipment levels, then Vauxhall believes its Vectra Estate is the car for you. writes Vaughan Freeman.

Despite competition from the multi-purpose people movers which in America have decimated sales in the estate car sector, and the drift towards four-wheel drive off-road cars, the humble estate is staging a sales revival.

Even Vauxhall might admit that this rise is driven as much by the carmaker's success in repackaging its estates as "must-have" life-style accessories rather than less-than-glamorous load-luggers. Estates now account for around 10 per cent of all car sales, compared to just over 7 per cent a decade

ago, and the forecast is that the total will rise to 15 per cent of the new car market by 2000.

Vauxhall, whose Luton plant is the sole source of the Vectra estate for the whole of Europe, says: "The image of the estate car as a utility vehicle has undergone a dramatic change. The former load-carrier has become a leisure vehicle for everyday use, long-distance travel, and for recreation." Which is why Vauxhall has ended a 10-year absence from the mid-size estate sector.

Vauxhall's own research shows that customers for mid-size estates are attracted more by the car's looks than by its practicality. As many as a third of estate buyers say that the car's looks are the

most important to them, followed by interior space (25 per cent) and luggage capacity (15 per cent).

This is reflected in the range of Activity Pack options on offer with the estate. For the surfing enthusiast there is the lockable roof-rack plus surfboard carrier, a roof-mounted boat carrier for the maritime fan, and even a lockable roof-rack base plus ski rack for those planning to take their Vectra to the snow. Other packages include the Sportsbody Pack, the Sports Chassis Pack, the travel Pack with aerodynamically shaped roof-top Spotbox, and the Towing Pack. The Vectra estate is for drivers who take their time off very seriously indeed.

The CDX is loaded with equipment, including safety-oriented items such as anti-lock braking, traction control, air conditioning, pollen filter, and — essential for any estate — automatic self-leveling. Cup holders are hidden by wooden panels and offer fascinating and cheap entertainment, unfolding via an incredibly complex array of hinges.

For Vauxhall, the Vectra estate's main target is the estate version of the rival Ford Mondeo, and to that end a confusing 23 versions are being offered. Why so many? Stuart Harris, Vauxhall team marketing manager, says: "We considered our customers very carefully. This means that there is a tremendous variety of models and, importantly, our customers will not have to compromise on style just because they need a larger load area."

It also means Vauxhall is able to offer the Vectra estate from £13,470 up to £22,270.

CAR JOURNAL



No problems: Valerie Elliott loads in her mother's wheelchair without having to struggle over a tailgate lip

Easy rider that carries it off

Many years ago, when Nissans were still called Datsun and estates had wooden strips, my wife, Valerie, fell in love with a Sunny, writes Harvey Elliott.

It was, she said, the only car that enabled her to slide

heavy shopping straight on to the flat platform, could carry football-muddy schoolboys and yet was light to handle, small enough to manoeuvre into the tightest spaces and economical.

But the old reliable Datsun estate was made redundant in favour of new, bigger, more macho versions, some of which we tried without too much enthusiasm. We also tried the ubiquitous hatchback — and came to hate the awful lip that forced anyone loading through the rear hatch and tailgate to lift heavy goods over it, far too high for their own good.

When my mother-in-law came to live in a "granny annexe" and needed to be manhandled into and out of the passenger seat and her wheelchair loaded into the back, the need for another genuine estate became paramount.

Search as we could, we

failed to find anything that was small, economical, comfortable and yet sturdy enough. There were huge tanks of the sort favoured by the parents of public schoolboys and girls from the Home Counties. We even found the odd small estate with a tailgate but without that awful lip, but in nearly every

case it seemed they were under-powered or had such wafer-thin bodywork that I could not feel safe driving them. Then came the Vauxhall Vectra estate.

The fuel tank is vast and the economy astonishing. In over 500 miles both in town and on the motorways I was getting over 60mpg; the official figure is 67.3mpg at a constant 50mph.

Perhaps because of the size of the fuel tank, there is a disconcerting banging and sloshing when braking and stopping at traffic lights as the fuel washes around the tank. But no car is perfect.

But within minutes I was

soled the diesel, admittedly noisy at first, soon quietened

as the engine warmed up. The acceleration on the motorway was "get-out of trouble" fast and the lay-out and feel of the driving seat excellent.

But would it pass the wheelchair and shopping test? It sailed through with flying colours as the wheelchair was bundled in with hardly a murmur of protest and heavy boxes of shopping were slid effortlessly on the wide load-bearing floor.

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Strange, but true... Alan Cops looks at some amazing medal winners in Toyota's Idea Olympics

What do Toyota engineers do in their spare time? Most of them, it seems, design and build vehicles. This confirmation of everything we know about the Japanese work ethic is celebrated every year by the company's "Idea Olympics".

The results range from concepts that might make rival designers scratch their heads and say: "Why didn't we think of that?" to zany creations which make the rest of us wonder how much we understand the Japanese sense of humour.

The latest competition to design "creative, original and fun vehi-

cles" attracted 1,322 entrants from the Toyota Engineering Society, a sort of out-of-hours think-tank dedicated to proving that engineering can be fun. It's encouraged by the company to develop technical skills and exchange imaginative ideas. How many of its conclusions go into cars for the road is a closely guarded secret.

The prizes, of course, are nothing so mean as money. "They do it

purely for the honour of winning," said a Toyota official. Top award, the Grand Prize in this the 21st Idea Olympics, went to the Z-Board: the ultimate skateboard, perhaps a little higher than most of us might like, but powered by a pollution-free spiral spring mechanism operated by a tilting movement. It also features four-wheel steering. Is this the answer to the problems of urban transport?

Of course, if you have a head for heights and feel the Z-Board is a little tame, then there's the Parent and Child Giraffe, which attracted a special award from the chief judge. Based on a real Toyota vehicle the device gives a relaxing tree-top view by raising the driver's seat six metres through the roof. Whoever met an engineer with his head in the clouds? An integrated umbrella provides weather protection and the whole ensemble comes with a warning that it should not be used while the car is in motion.

Perhaps the most practical idea is the Bike Cycle, which has interchangeable engines, one for qualified adults or a smaller one for children. The Hand Boy moves along by bending its fingers through a "double four-joint mechanism" — which, according to my

calculation, makes it one joint better off than the real thing. It also comes with built-in amusement for the kids: if you're stuck in a jam it can play that old "rock, scissors, paper" game.

The QT Cart relies on a constant speed rotating roller transaxle and is operated by a single lever, while the climbing Walcar is said to mimic the movements of animals. A double front axle allows the

front wheels to act independently when walking or climbing, but when running it behaves just like any other four-wheel buggy.

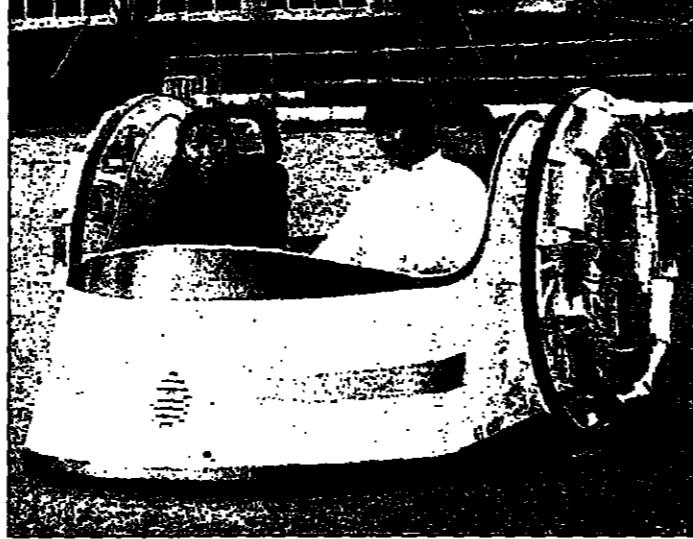
What happens to all these wonderful vehicles after the judging is a bit of a mystery. "I think some may go into the Toyota museum. Others may be taken apart so the bits can be used in other experiments," said the lady in Toyota's press office.

But next time you read a piece here or anywhere else about how boring Japanese cars are, remember the Idea Olympics. Then see if you can detect any "Giraffe" influence in the cabin of your Corolla or Corolla.

Land of the driving fun



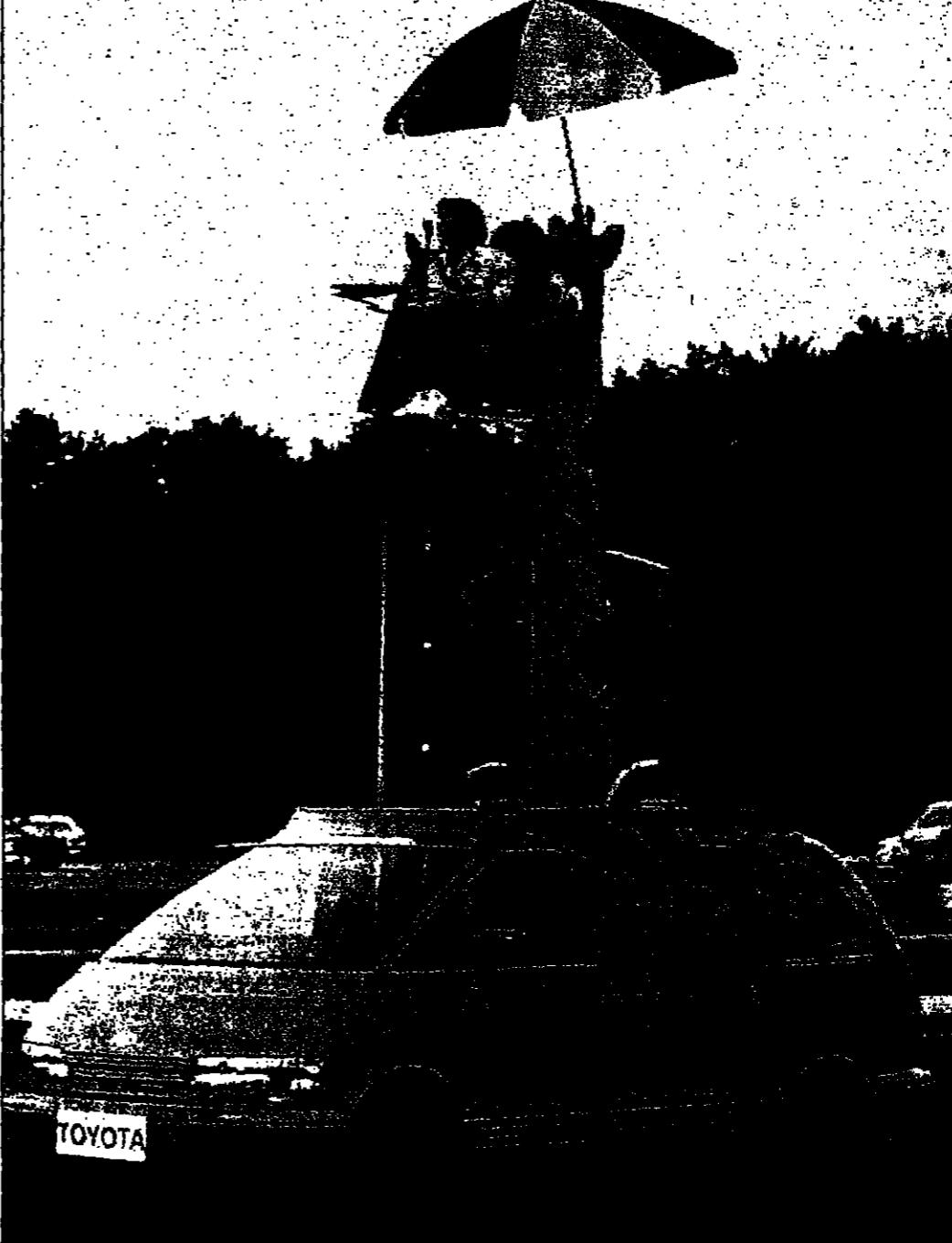
The Z-Board, powered by a pollution-free spiral spring mechanism



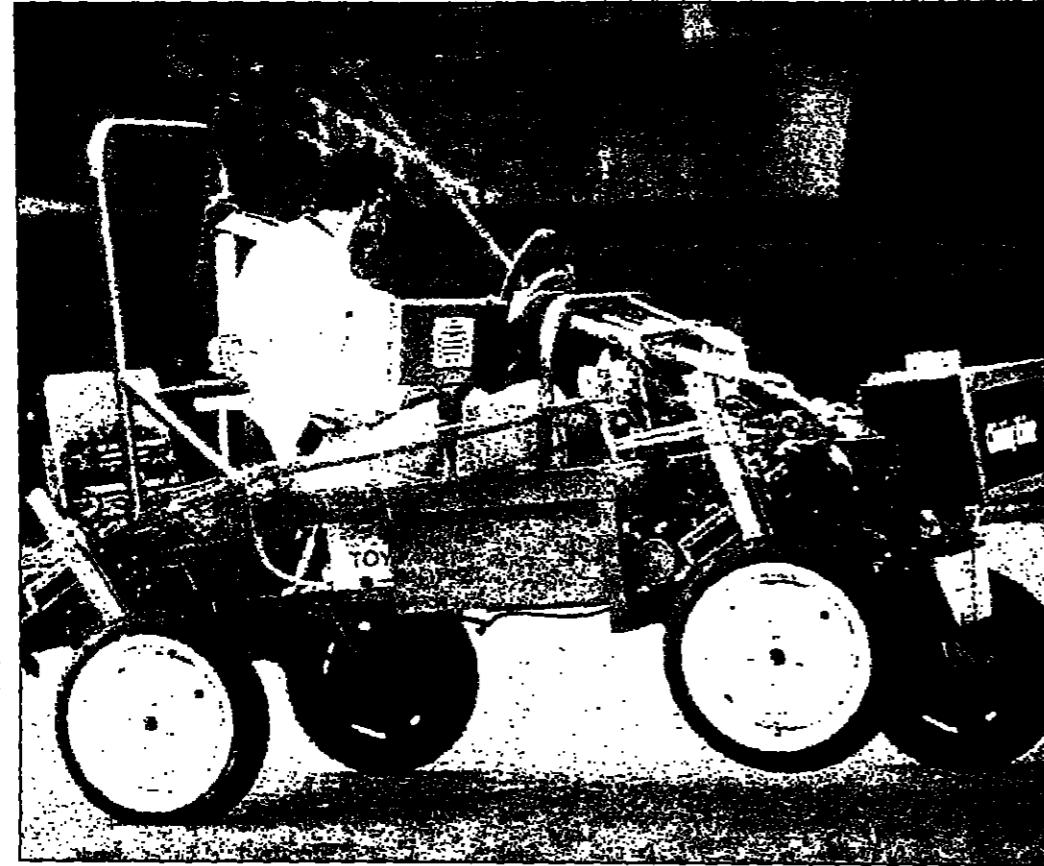
The Bike Cycle: one engine for qualified adults, one for children



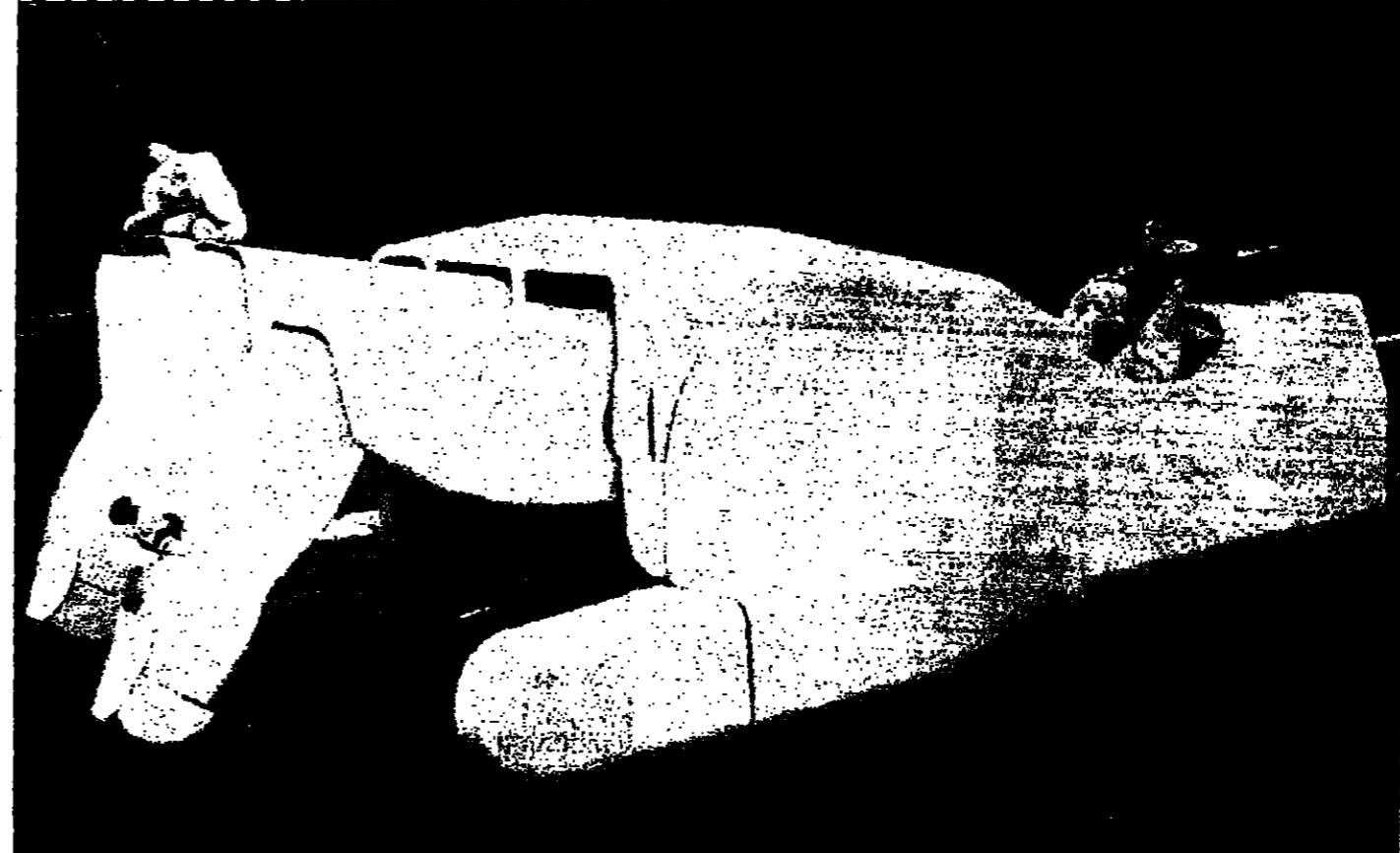
Hand Boy: bends its fingers through a "double four-joint mechanism", which makes it one joint better off than the real thing



Parent and Child Giraffe: based on a real Toyota, with the driver's seat raised above the roof



The Climbing Walcar: a four-wheel buggy said to imitate the movements of animals



QT Cart: constant speed rotating roller transaxle

Hyundai creates a whole new concept of taking the car out for a spin

A washing machine. That's what the new Hyundai Accent MVI Coupe reminds me of. A functional and simple-to-use household item, with all its buttons and controls in the right places, doing exactly what the manufacturer says they should. Nothing offends, nothing surprises; and, despite being the sporty version of Europe's top-selling Korean car, that's about as exciting as Hyundai motoring gets.

Just as ordinary white goods look at home in the kitchen, an Accent Coupe will look fine on the drive. But if a Mercedes-Benz Coupe is the Aga of domestic garages, then this Hyundai is in the realms of a Baxi washer-dryer. A reliable household appliance you can take for granted, but not something you brag about.

Cars as white goods isn't a new idea, but it is increasingly becoming the domain of the Koreans. Hyundai and Daewoo

The Accent, says Helen Mound, is on being like a washing machine — it does the job, but would you boast about it?

have become household names, challenging the popularity of functional and reliable Japanese cars.

There's no criticism hidden in calling these cars white goods — many people think such an approach is the future of motoring. What you lose in individuality or entertainment you gain in reliability and practicality — which is exactly what you want from household appliances.

Daewoo dealerships bear out the feeling of cars as white goods by imitating the experience of shopping at an Argos warehouse.

Hyundai maintains a more traditional approach to selling cars, with 150 dealers in the UK, who sold nearly 11,000 Accent hatchbacks and 19,000 cars overall last year.

The Hyundai Accent MVI Coupe, which has just gone on sale — not to be confused with the sexy-looking Hyundai Coupe launched last year — is a three-door version of the five-door Accent hatchback. The MVI badge indicates the new multi-valve, four-valves per cylinder 1.5-litre engine (the other 1.5 and 1.3 engines in the range are three-valves per cylinder).

The manufacturer claims 18 per cent more cleaning power, er, sorry, more power, thanks to the extra valves. The respectable performance bears witness to that: managing a top speed of 112mph and a 0-60mph sprint time of 11.2 seconds, which makes overtaking swifter and safer.

It's a comfortable but unremarkable experience to drive

the Accent MVI. I've already forgotten what the steering was like, which means it must have been light, satisfactorily responsive and reasonably precise.

I do remember that its turning circle was tight enough to make it around a mini-roundabout with one turn — all that really matters in day-to-day driving. Similarly, the pedals did their job without causing concern — not too stiff, not too light — and the brakes hauled the car to a standstill without raising an eyebrow. The gearshift is slightly more memorable because of its long, likely movement between each gate, but that's hardly likely to spoil your day.

The Coupe's interior is also pleasingly unobtrusive. There

HYUNDAI ACCENT 1.5 COUPE
Engine: four-cylinder, 16-valve, 1495cc
producing 98bhp at 5,900 rpm.
Performance: Top speed: 112mph; 0-60mph, 11.2 seconds.
Economy: Urban 26.6mpg, extra urban 42.8mpg, combined 34.9mpg.

Equipment: Power steering, radio/cassette stereo and four speakers, electric front windows, manual sunroof, remote key, glove and fuel filler release.
Price: £10,567.
Optional Extras: Metallic paint £199; chrome paint £239; Air-conditioning £1,270.



Hyundai Accent MVI Coupe: what you lose in individuality, you gain in reliability

MERCEDES

500 SL
32 valve, 91 model in silver, 100,000 miles, full leather, dark blue hide, rear seats, CD player, cruise, electric memory seats, fully loaded, 35,000 miles, Full M5, 1991. Marbach Silver. This car is in showroom condition, only people seeking the best need apply. 0645 262464/ 0171 520 2594

500 SL
32 valve, 91 model in silver, blue hide, rear seats, CD player, cruise, electric memory seats, fully loaded, 35,000 miles, Full M5, 1991. Marbach Silver. This car is in showroom condition, only people seeking the best need apply. 0645 262464/ 0171 520 2594

300SL
24v, 93 K, 9,000 miles, FMSM, red with cream leather, twin air bags, rear seats & Sory CD, 1 previous owner, £45,500.00. Tel: 0161 443 1101 or 0836 590 062.

300TE
Auto (24v), 1991 Reg, full leather, Air con, electric sunroof, CD stack, remote central lock. Recent Major service costing £2,270, only 2 owners from new with Merc history, £13,000. Tel: 0171 457 6262.

E200
Auto
1995, 16v, 160bhp, grey, sport trim, 25k miles, AMG alloys, rear spoiler, full alarm, removable seats. Superb! £16,995
(0) 01733 643333/ (0) 01494 543323

300SE
1991, Met. blue, 58k miles, Cheshire, 1 previous owner, £16,995
0171 439 8908.

.500 SL
95, Met. grey, cream int, 1 careful owner, FSH, low mileage, £64,995
Mark 0181 749 5521

Mercedes OWNERS
COMPREHENSIVE INSURANCE
FROM £170
Exclusive Scheme for Mercedes
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Office Hours
Internet: <http://www.mhnltd.co.uk>

C200
SPORT
1995, 16v, 160bhp, grey, sport trim, 25k miles, AMG alloys, rear spoiler, full alarm, removable seats. Superb! £16,995
(0) 01733 643333/ (0) 01494 543323

E320
1991, Anthracite met, Cheshire, leather int, Climate control, 16v, 200bhp, grey, 170k miles, 1 previous owner, £16,995
0181 8027654

420SL
95, Neonic blue, cream hide, rear seats, FSH, 67k miles, £179,995
0171 973 1673 (h)
0171 973 1673 (v)

MERCEDES WANTED
1987-1995 Premium Quality used
Mercedes-Benz vehicles
WANTED: Wanted all Mercedes-Benz
any miles / condition. 01970
520 2272/ 01245 227290

300SL
D reg, 62K, White. Offers around £18,000 (Newbury) Tel: 01635 42855.

E250 DIESEL
D reg, 16v, 160bhp, 4x4, Red, Auto, alloys, Managing Director's car, Company maintained Service History £15,500
Call: BRIAN KELLOW
0117 982 8888.

300SL
1992, E reg, low miles, 20k miles, FSH, 16v, 160bhp, grey, 170k miles, 1 previous owner, £16,995
Tel: 01724 512577/ 0802 615830.

MGF
1.8i.
1996, PAS, 3,500 miles, 1 lady owner, ERG, immediate, £16,995 ono.
01287 639181.

SL500
1991, SL500, post opac. 8 disc stops, 200bhp, CO, Met. Blue, 1 owner, £28,995. Tel: 0191 467 5887 (w) or 0191 388 7274 (o).

E300
diesel Auto, L reg, Dark blue, 69K, FMSH, A/Bag, ESH, 1 owner, £17,950
0831 383638

SL320
95, Azurite metallic, Grey leather, climate control, MPS, 100,000 miles, 250,000 miles, Tel: 01473 723977/ 01473 219222.

MGF 1.8i
1997 model in British Racing Green still in showroom, unregistered, electronic power steering, 16v, 160bhp. Call Richard on 01603 881111 or 01603 871933 with your best offer.

230 TE auto.
1992, Metallic black with 7 seats, ABS & alloys, 61,000 miles, FSH, £17,500.
Tel: 01252 614647 (w) or 01252 612772 (o).

E300 D
Elegance, May 1996, 2,000 miles, Auto, Cruise, Azurite Blue, many extras, private sale, £22,750.
01745 720286.

300SL
SPORT CONV
89 Auto, 2nd 7 yrs, high spec.
£39,995 pmo
0956 838291/ 0161 554 2341.

230 TE
1 reg, 65K miles, Air Con, 7 seats, ESH, 16v, FSH, 160bhp, £26,450.
0171 2213508
0374 754316

E 220 Coupe auto.
Jan 1994.
Colour coded, red piped leather interior, red piped leather AMG alloy, ESH, 4-spoke steering wheel, CD, Incruslate, FSH, 27,000 miles, £23,950.
01683 340783.

230 TE
Auto, 16v, Blue/Silver, 60,000 miles, 160bhp, 4x4, ABS & alloys, 16v, 160bhp, £24,995.
01293 862666.

560SEC
Auto, 16v, Blue/Silver, 60,000 miles, 160bhp, 4x4, ABS & alloys, 16v, 160bhp, £24,995.
01294 722357.

C230
ELEGANCE
1997, Auto, AG, metallic, leather seats, other extras, 300 miles, £22,000. Tel: 0191 272 46993.

190
2.5 Diesel, Auto, 16v, Blue/Silver, 60,000 miles, 160bhp, 4x4, ABS & alloys, 16v, 160bhp, £24,995.
01293 862666.

C180
CLASSIC
27v, Black/Grey int, VGC, FMSH, 1 owner, £14,500.
01982 735016.

230CE
H Reg, Black/Black, Grey int, Met. Blue, 16v, 160bhp, £14,500.
01757 375930
0395 335979.

SKYLINE GTR
Metallic silver, low mileage, private number plate, 17 in wheels, upgraded breaks, 370 bhp, immaculate condition, best in the country, £26,900.
01283 862014.

MERCEDES
AUTORISED
DEALERS

500 SEC
Auto, 16v, Blue/Silver, 60,000 miles, 160bhp, 4x4, ABS & alloys, 16v, 160bhp, £24,995.
01294 722357.

C230
ELEGANCE
1997, Auto, AG, metallic, leather seats, other extras, 300 miles, £22,000. Tel: 0191 272 46993.

NISSAN
SKYLINE GTR
1997, Black/Black, Grey int, 16v, 160bhp, £24,995.
01283 862014.

REGISTRATION NUMBERS

CARMART 2: DRY ICE, DISCO AND VIDEO SCREENS — BRITAIN'S FORECOURTS ARE CHANGING

QUADRANT



With a massive choice of vehicles, supermarkets located near major motorways will offer prices for new and used cars well below traditional outlets — and buyers will not have to shop around to compare the range of what's on offer

Booming disco music, swirling white clouds of dry ice, and a full-blown mock-up of a 1950s American diner are the new face of car selling.

The GTI Centre in Huddersfield claims to be Britain's first "themed" showroom, where the emphasis is as much on making it a place to go, to enjoy, and to be seen at, as well as a place for swapping cash for wheeled metal.

The face of car showrooms and forecourts is changing as new and used car outlets big and small try new ways to woo customers. Instead of haggle and hassle, the anxiety of choosing the right car, and the fret and fear of negotiating the right deal, the man behind the GTI Centre, Paul Beswick, has invested £1.3million in taking a Disneyworld-style approach aimed at relaxing and entertaining would-be buyers.

At the other extreme, a string of up to half-a-dozen Car Supermarket megastores is set to spread across the nation, each featuring up to 2,000 second-hand cars up to four years old, with the pledge that customers will never see a salesman until they are ready to part with their cash.

As well as the 1950s diner, Beswick's GTI Centre is crammed with motororing memorabilia such as signs, petrol pumps and traffic lights. Sporting souvenirs include helmets and racing suits worn by the likes of Damon Hill, Ayrton Senna and Nigel Mansell. There is a wall of nine video screens, a blaring disco system, and a single-seat racing car hangs from the ceiling.

"I wanted to bring a bit more fun into the industry I suppose, so we built a themed garage using all sorts of automotive memorabilia featuring racing themes," Bes-

wick says. "The car sales sector seemed to have stagnated a bit and this was my way of shaking things up."

Razzmatazz alone is not enough to sell cars, Beswick is happy to concede that the cars he sells "might not always be the cheapest, but they are guaranteed to be the best". They are backed by a complete package aimed at giving customers peace of mind, including 12 months MoT, a comprehensive warranty of up to 36 months, insurance advice, full valet and a check on whether the vehicle has been stolen or crashed in the past.

Full mechanical back-up is provided with a rolling road technical centre and workshop. Selling and tuning performance cars is just part of the deal. Beswick's GTI Centre sells everything from branded engine oil, to caps, key fobs, and leisure wear.

"We have set out to create the Number One performance car supermarket, and to make it fun," Beswick says. "There are no suits, and no ties. Everything is very relaxed so that customers are not intimidated.

BUYERS' GUIDE

- Know just what kind of car you want when you set out.
- Don't get carried away: dream cars rarely come second-hand.
- Don't buy without a test drive: 20 minutes at the wheel is worth hours on the forecourt.
- Check the paper-work: a £28.50 vehicle identity check from HPI (01722 422422) could save a lot of trouble.
- Don't accept the first price quoted: haggle or shop around.

"We could have built a smaller unit, and filled it with GTIs, laid the forecourt with tarmac and just sold cars. We decided to do something a bit different and more interesting, more like a nightclub."

The next stage is to use the Centre as a host venue where performance car enthusiasts can congregate every fortnight to show off their cars, swap stories, and enjoy a meal. It is hoped that first to take advantage of the Centre's "Show Off Cruises" will be the VW Owners Club in February.

The Car Supermarket in Cannock, Staffordshire, takes a very different approach. Last year the six-acre site sold an extraordinary 20,000 vehicles, and is now being expanded to 12 acres. A similar-sized outlet will open in Northampton in the summer, with long-term plans for up to 10 Car Supermarket megastores nationally selling around 200,000 used cars a year.

Each Supermarket will be sited within a few miles of a major motorway to make access as easy as possible, and feature everything from a cafe to a creche.

Car Supermarkets chief executive Peter King says that huge volumes enable his sites to sell cars up to two years old for an average £1,000 cheaper than high street showrooms, and around £4,000 cheaper than the same car might cost new. If the scale of the operation

is right, the impact of what we do is best indicated by the fact that we have been so successful. Out of the 3,000 people who visit our site each week, one in ten buys a car. That compares to an average conversion rate of one in 30 elsewhere in the trade."

Customers can simply browse among the cars without being approached by a member of staff. Only if they see a car they like, and then actively seek out one of the 20-strong staff, do things get started.

The price on the car windscreen is the price paid, and there is no haggling. Similarly with part exchanges, the ball park offer for the customer's trade-in car is set using the independent CAP Black Book price guide via computer screen, and is finalised once the Supermarket's used car assessors have inspected the trade-in vehicle.

King says: "The impact of what we do is best indicated by the fact that we have been so successful. Out of the 3,000 people who visit our site each week, one in ten buys a car. That compares to an average conversion rate of one in 30 elsewhere in the trade."

"If I was a private buyer looking for an executive car I would go nowhere near one with a pudding stick — a manual. Such cars must have automatic transmission or they will not sell second-hand."

"Whatever car you buy, get an alarm and immobiliser. If the car doesn't come with one, get it fitted the day after you take delivery."

Are there features that will actively deter would-be buyers? John Highfield, marketing director of the Car Shop which advertises used cars on interactive TV and the Internet, says: "Consumers who are buying with a view to sell should also consider what can turn a used car buyer off. Cars with boy racer stripes, sporty features such as an attached spoiler, and ostentatious colours all turn people's heads away from the car."

Priceless source

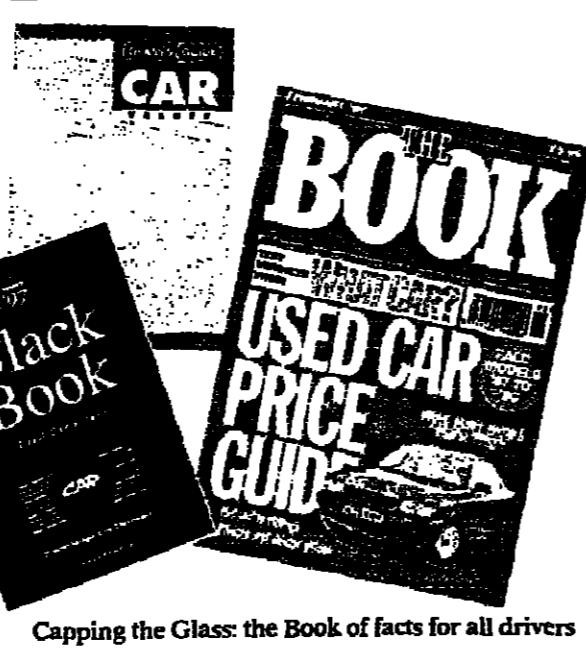
■ NEW CAR sales in 1997 are likely to exceed 2.1 million, the third highest on record, according to *Glass's Guide*, one of two pocket-sized volumes which the men in the motor trade refer to when they quote the "book value" of a used car.

The best year for new car sales in Britain was 1989 when 2,300,944 were sold. The following year sales reached 2,215,574. While such figures are made public, the real information in *Glass's* and its rival, the CAP Black Book, is closely guarded by the trade. The books give guide prices for all used cars, detailing minor changes and variations by the month. But

SPARE PARTS

a new publication which appeared last year means that second-hand car buyers can go into the market armed with similar information. Produced by the publishers of *What Car?* magazine, *The Book, Used Car Price Guide*, sets out in the same way prices for both private and dealer sales. It also has road test information and reliability ratings for each car.

The book is available from newsagents and bookstores £2.95 monthly.



Capping the Glass: the Book of facts for all drivers

Carlton athletic

FORECOURT

PROOF of the strength of the Vauxhall Carlton (1982-1993) came when it was chosen by the police to cover massive mileages, many at high speed, round-the-clock as a motorway patrol car, reports CAP Black Book.

The straightforward mechanics of the car are a huge plus, as this keeps maintenance costs low. For the DIY motorist who likes to tinker, the Carlton is accessible and not too hi-tech, Vaughan Freeman writes.

A downside is its image. Caravanners soon cottoned on to its huge towing power and carrying ability, and for all its tough and robust



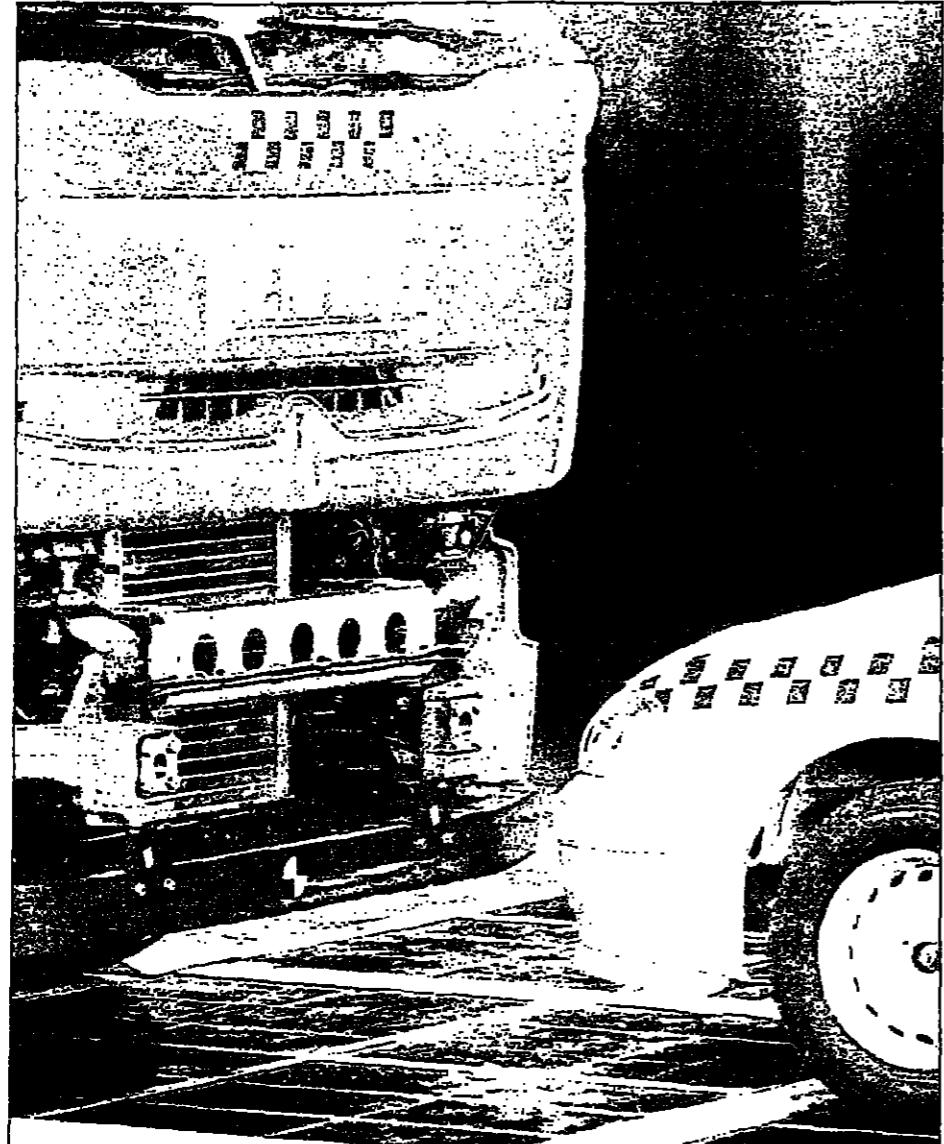
strengths, the Carlton has always been considered relatively unrefined.

Best deal is the 2.0i CDX auto estate. Expect to pay around £6,000 for a 1990 H-reg with average mileage. The Carlton is a big car, so avoid the underpowered 1.8-litre automatics, and any car that has had a hammering in a previous life as a taxi. Watch out for oil leaks, noisy camshafts and whining power steering pumps.

The Seat Ibiza (1987-92) is also practical and simple to maintain, inexpensive to buy and handsome. Unfortunately it is also flimsily-built, has poor used values and a whacky dashboard. The Ibiza is not liked in the trade because of its poor build quality, so trade-in prices for owners who are selling can be very depressing.

Avoid any examples that are not in absolutely perfect

'The truck weighed 16 tons; the collision was head-on; the Megane's passengers survived'



When the Megane was hurled at 40mph straight at the front of Renault Premium truck...

Smashing head-on into a 16-ton truck must rate pretty high up every car driver's list of worst motoring nightmares. A seemingly sure route to automotive oblivion. Across Europe every year almost 2,000 people die in such one-sided accidents, writes Vaughan Freeman.

While the idea of such a smash might appeal to fans of the controversial J.G. Ballard novel and movie *Crash*, to those of us with less blunted

sensibilities, watching the real thing "in the metal" comes as a shocking blow to all the senses. Even when the accident is a life-size laboratory experiment, the doomed family of three a trio of computer-linked crash dummies and the "road" the Renault heavy commercial vehicle testing centre near Paris, the impact is no less phenomenal.

Watched by cameras capable of taking 1,000 pictures a second, a 1.2-ton Renault Megane family saloon with

BRAKE POINT

■ THE impetus to make safety rather than performance the main selling point for modern vehicles continues at Mercedes-Benz, which has developed a "brainy brake" system to radically reduce stopping distances in an emergency.

■ The Advanced Brake Assist System has been shown to cut the braking distance of a car travelling on a dry road at 62mph from 239ft to just 131ft. It is being introduced at no extra cost on Mercedes cars.

■ Engineers found that, even in an emergency, drivers do not exert maximum braking pressure and that in an accident 99 per cent are either too light on the brakes or only apply full braking pressure too late.

■ Brake Assist's electronic sensors constantly monitor the speed at which the brake pedal is applied. The system's computer "brain" learns the driver's normal brake pedal reactions.

■ When the pedal is applied much faster than usual, the system registers this as an emergency and overrides the driver's braking foot via a pedal booster to exert 100 per cent brake pressure in a fraction of a second.

destroyed and bumper twisted, the whole rear end of the Megane flew up into the air. Then the entire car leapt up sideways and back, the front completely destroyed.

Only a few years ago such a collision would have meant certain death for everybody in the saloon. Yet computer readings of the stresses and strains suffered by the car's three occupants showed that not only would they have lived, but would have survived relatively unscathed.



...the sickening impact turned the stomach to water. But the car did not become fatally trapped under the truck's bumper

Their survival was due to a combination of Megane's programmed restraint system, including airbags and seat pretensioners, as well as the car's ability to collapse and deform on impact, so progressively absorbing violent crash energy, instead of passing it on directly to the car occupants, with fatal results.

However, crucial to their survival is a technical breakthrough by Renault that the safety-conscious French firm would like to be mandatory on all heavy commercial vehicles sold across Europe and, the company says, could save close to 600 lives a year.

The problem with head-on collisions between trucks and cars is three-fold. First, the truck can be up to 50 times heavier than a saloon and on impact that massive energy must be absorbed and dissipated. Not much can be done about that, other than making 16-ton family saloons to help them punch their weight. But the two other key ele-

ments in such collisions can be addressed, says Renault. By making the front of trucks deformable, rather than a metal wall on wheels, so that it absorbs energy, and by designing trucks to prevent the lethal habit of cars "under-running" and wedging themselves beneath the front bumper of the truck, lives can be saved and lorries made more "smash friendly".

The Renault answer is the clumsy-titled Front Under-run Prevention System, a beam made of high-yield strength steel which, bolted immediately under the truck's front bumper, deforms on impact and also stops the car under-running. Instead, it can bounce away.

Across Europe, some 4,200 people a year die in crashes between cars and heavy trucks, 1,900 of them in head-on collisions. A third of those could be prevented if the under-run prevention technology were to be generally adopted says Renault.

of cars, vans and heavy trucks to be designed so that, when inevitably they do crash, injuries are kept to a minimum. Engineering director Philippe Venre says: "We believe these safety improvements should be imposed by legislation, but that takes time, like the airbag, which is favoured but has not been enforced by law.

"Safety is not about marketing scoops. All manufacturers should be committed to the same levels of safety in their vehicles."

For Brossette the ideal would be for manufacturers to get together to share ideas and technology, as Renault's car and truck divisions have done, and to build their vehicles with the effects of car-truck collisions in mind.

Brossette says: "There are a lot of people who see large vehicles as 'killer trucks'. They think they should be taken off the road, and see only that trucks have a bad image. The idea is to show that we can build a truck that is safer."



As the Megane bounced clear, computer analysis shows that its occupants would have escaped relatively unharmed

Elinor Hardman on an ABS survey

A locking system we have to learn

that point in the compartment will die," said Priez.

The drivers were split into four groups balanced for age, sex and driving experience. The groups used different braking systems and received different training.

Priez judged that 87 per cent of experimental crashes by drivers with standard brakes would have been fatal to passengers in the dummy car. ABS saved many of these "deaths", with fatality figures of 67 per cent for drivers unaware they were using ABS and 62 per cent for those knowingly using the system. Only 36 per cent of collisions by drivers who had been given a morning's tuition on using ABS were categorised as fatal.

The team analysed the severity of collisions by examining impact speed and collision point on the stationary vehicle.

"If a car impacts faster than 40mph on to the side of another car's passenger compartment, anyone seated at

sees the 30 per cent projected fatality difference between drivers trained and untrained in ABS as evidence for the importance of instruction.

During the morning's session, not one of the drivers braked effectively to start with. All needed practice and guidance.

Drivers are reluctant to push their feet fully down on the brake and keep them there, especially if they know they have to turn. They are often scared of losing control and release the pedal too quickly. Unless ABS is applied forcefully and constantly it will not work to its full effect.

The study comes amid claims that ABS brakes and other car safety devices cause more accidents than they save by giving drivers false assurance as to their abilities to survive dangerous situations.

Data from the US Transport Department suggests that while ABS may have reduced pedestrian deaths by over one quarter, fatal car accidents have increased as drivers are losing control in emergencies and fail to stay on the road.

This may be partially explained by a study in Munich several years ago. A taxi fleet in which half the cars had newly-fitted ABS brakes and half had standard brakes was put under secret observation for three years. Researchers anticipated a fall in accident rates of ABS fitted cars. To their surprise, accident rates for the two groups were stable and identical. Only driver behaviour changed, with ABS drivers going faster, making sharper turns and having more near misses. Drivers who feel safer go faster and take more risks. They are secure in the false knowledge that they are unlikely to come to harm.

Priez admits: "We can't say ABS is really improving safety. It is reducing pedestrian accidents in towns, but it seems that people are taking too many risks and failing to use the system properly. Construction is needed to show people they are not indestructible — or above bad driving."

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